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XIII.

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BY

FORTUNÉ DU BOISGOBEY.

VOL. I.

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THE CORAL PIN.

PART I.

THE VELVET MASK.

I.

Is there still any nobleman in the eighties who, in his lonely château, still thinks, while he doctors his rheumatism, of the fine years when he wore a dazzling uniform as a guardsman, and fought his duels with the liberals? Is there a venerable dowager anywhere in the provincial manors who remembers the festive days of her youth, and dreams of the dress which she wore at the Théâtre de Madame on the night when *Michel et Christine* was played for the first time?

If there be any survivors of those gay days, followed, alas! by three or four revolutions, they can surely recall the Carnival of 1821. It was a long and merry one, and when March came, Paris was alive with gaiety. In those days, the city thought only of pleasure. There was a lull in politics. France, thrown into mourning by Louvel's crime—the murder of the Duc de Berri—was beginning once more to hope for peaceful days. There was no more talk of conspiracies. The beautiful fishwoman barbarously murdered by Montreuil, the fireman, was much more often mentioned than General Lafayette, and the crowd preferred balls and theatres to the oratorical struggles at the Chamber of Deputies.

On the evening of Shrove-Sunday that year all the theatres were full, and there was dancing everywhere, in the Faubourg Saint Germain, in the Chaussée d'Antin, and at La Courtille. Even in the Marais there was dancing going on, on the first floor of an old house on the Place Royale, the residence of the Chevalier de Saint-Hélier, a gentleman who, so his neighbours declared, had coined his own title.

They bore him a grudge for not admitting them to his reception rooms where he entertained very select society, and the women were jealous of his daughter Octavie, who surpassed them all in beauty and grace.

The chevalier did not associate with tradespeople whose favourite paper was the *Constitutionnel*. He was a royalist, and prided himself upon his love of literature and art. Thus, he only received those who were loyal, men of the world, popular artists, singers, and authors. On the evening in question, all these classes were represented at the door of his abode: some by handsome carriages, and others by humble cabs. Two late arrivals

were standing at the door under the arcade, having just alighted from a hackney coach. One of them wore the fashionable ball-dress of the time, an opera-hat, a blue coat with gold buttons, a lace frill, knee-breeches, pumps, and silk stockings. The other was in full uniform, that of a royal body-guard, with his sword at his side, his sub-lieutenant's epaulet on the right shoulder, and duly booted, spurred, and helmeted. The elder of the two was not twenty-five, and it was hard to tell which was the taller or the better looking, for they were nearly alike in height, and greatly resembled one another. The officer, however, had an expressive face, dark eyes and hair, and quick gestures; while his companion had something of the look of a young English nobleman, and was fair, with a cold and reserved demeanour.

"You will not let me introduce you, then?" said the latter.

"No, indeed!" replied the officer, with a laugh. "It is quite enough to have come as far as the door with you. I hear that people lose their hearts at Monsieur de Saint-Hélier's house, and I wish to keep mine to myself."

"Oh, as for what you do with it—"

"My dear fellow, I do with it what I like, or rather what I can; and I don't desire to offer it to the fair Octavie."

"You have made a worse use of it than that sometimes."

"That may be. I confess that during the past week I have exposed it to some risk, but that is only for the time being; at the places you visit, a man must not trifle, you know. What should I do in such a place? I like to change my loves as often as I change garrison. You, René, risk nothing. You are able to defend yourself from twenty pretty women, while a mere look makes me take fire like a cartridge. Still, I advise you to be careful for all that. It is said that Saint-Hélier's daughter would not object to being a countess. And you, my dear cousin, are a count; your nobility goes back to the Crusades, let me say, with no offence to your brother, who has taken it into his head to play the liberal and deny his ancestry. Now, the Saint-Héliers have never, that I know of, ridden in the royal carriages,* and if your chevalier were forced to prove his nobility—"

"He is the last scion of one of the oldest families in Aunis."

"Bah! Aunis, indeed! I think he comes from some mercantile set. Monsieur de Clisson, who is a sergeant in Noailles' company, declares that Saint-Hélier's ancestors were dealers in cloth. I must find out from my father, who has heraldry at his fingers' ends."

"My dear Henri," said René, hastily, "I beg of you never to mention him to my uncle. Don't tell the marquis that I visit at the chevalier's house."

"Ah! so I have brought you to the point I aimed at! You must confess! I now know what to think. You are madly in love with Mademoiselle Octavie, and with your disposition you will very likely marry her. Now, you suspect that my father would be opposed to so absurd a match, and you don't wish to fall out with him. But don't be alarmed, I won't betray you, but on condition," laughingly added the young officer, "that you will not tell him of my visits to the Baroness de Casanova."

"You are mistaken, Henri," said René in an agitated tone, "I shall not marry any one; I should be too bad a match, for I am not, like you, the son of General de Brouage, a marquis and a peer of France."

* To ride in the royal carriages at the old French court, a man had to prove four generations of nobility.—*Trans.*

"But you are his nephew."

"True, but my father, as you know, left me no money, and it would not suit me to marry into a wealthy family. I am glad to visit the chevalier because his house is attractive, and his daughter charming. But don't be alarmed, I shall not fall in love. And now, good night, as you have made up your mind to spend your evening at that gambling-house."

"That expression is severe, cousin. Madame de Casanova, the aunt of the adorable Stella, does not live in what can be called a convent, but very good society is to be met at her place, at least as regards the men; the proof of that is that I have met your brother Fabien there, more than once."

"My brother does wrong to visit such a place."

"It is as good as that which charms you so much. At least people are rank and unpretentious there. The aunt may perhaps live by her winnings, and the fortune of the niece may only be her beauty. But can you tell me from what Monsieur de Saint-Hélier derives his income? Can you prove that Mademoiselle Octavie is not on the lookout for a husband? But all this is no business of mine, and I am losing time by arguing with you while my rivals are holding good cards and ogling Stella—and rivals I have, I must confess it. Good-night, and good luck to you! If your love affair allows you time, come to see me to-morrow at my father's house. I am not on guard. We will breakfast together at the Café Hardy." Then without awaiting René's reply, the young guardsman hurried off to his hackney carriage.

His cousin saw him climb into the canary-coloured vehicle, perched on huge wheels, and he shrugged his shoulders as he muttered: "That woman will bring him misfortune. Ah! if I were the heir to a peerage and a hundred thousand francs a year, I shouldn't pass my life running after a mere adventuress."

The yellow cab was already far off. René, after watching it for an instant, made up his mind to enter the house, the doorway of which was lighted by two lamps, and he went slowly up the well-worn steps which must have dated from the time when Marion Delorme lived in the Place Royale. Men who are in love and about to appear before the object of their affections, have a peculiar manner and bearing. The least perspicacious observer would thus have guessed at once that Henri had not been mistaken as regarded his cousin, and that René did not go to M. de Saint-Hélier's house to dance, or hear verses read. He feverishly toyed with his frill, talked to himself in a low tone, and gesticulated as he went along. He had, in a word, the look of some schoolboy going into society for the first time.

He was, however, neither a beginner, nor a fool, nor even a timid man; Count René de Brouage was indeed an attaché of the ministry of Foreign Affairs. His father, after fighting against the Republic in La Vendée and in Brittany, had fled to London and died there at the time of the Consulate, after marrying an Irish lady of noble birth, but extremely poor, who had not long survived him. René had thus found himself an orphan at six years of age, and destitute of everything. He had a brother, and the two outcasts would certainly have died of hunger had they not been cared for by a relative of their mother, who took charge of them and had them educated at the Jesuit College in Dublin. Their only future prospect seemed to be a life of exile in the Indies or Canada, with a cadetship in some regiment or other, when the fall of Napoleon enabled them to return to France. They did so at once, and there found a protector on whom they had not relied.

The head of their family, the Marquis Adalbert de Brouage, their father's elder brother, had emigrated at the outset of the Revolution, and had fared better than his junior. He had married at Coblenz, the heiress of a rich German nobleman, and after the Eighteenth Brumaire, he had returned to France and reconciled himself with the First Consul's government. Bonaparte, who was always on the look-out for men of family and brave officers, at once promoted the rich and dashing volunteer of Condé's army to a lieutenancy in the cavalry, and for fourteen years the marquis was always at hand whenever any fighting was going on in Europe. He advanced rapidly. He became a colonel at the beginning of the Russian campaign. He was promoted to the rank of brigadier-general at Lutzen, and after the Emperor's abdication, he turned to the king who received him with great favour. The legitimate sovereign could not punish a nobleman for having served France. Three years after the first Restoration, the Marquis de Brouage was a lieutenant-general, and on the 5th of March, 1819, when the celebrities and great lords of the new and old régimes were made peers of the realm, his name was set down on the list.

The general had not thought of his nephews during the existence of the Empire, and, in point of fact, he did not know whether they were still living, but he received them in 1814 with open arms, and loaded them with favours. He began by obtaining for them the restoration of an estate which had belonged to their father, and which had not been sold by the authorities, although it had been confiscated under the Reign of Terror as belonging to an *émigré*. He then offered to procure a military position for them in the royal household; but René preferred diplomacy, and Fabien elected to live on the small income derived from his share of his father's property. Fabien indeed had certain ideas which his elder brother did not share. At the beginning of 1821, Count René de Brouage was about to be appointed secretary of legation, but he felt little inclined to live at some petty German court or even in Italy. He did not, however, take much part in Parisian pleasure, for he preferred a retired life, seldom seeing either his brother or his cousin Antoinette, the general's charming daughter, although she received him with the utmost cordiality whenever he called. Indeed, for six months past, René had only visited M. de Saint-Héliers, and he did not do so because he thought the company which he found there attractive. There were few women to be met with, but any number of academicians. Now René cared very little for wits, and he execrated pedantic men of learning. He felt no pleasure in hearing Pichat's tragedies read, had no clear opinions as to the literary merit of M. Arnault, the admired author of *Germanicus*, and he scarcely had heard of M. de Lamartine, whose first "*Meditations*" had just been published. Still he was a poet in his own way; his heart had never felt any degraded passion, but, on the contrary, was attracted by all that was spiritual and refined.

René's dream was of a pure love, heart affinity, and other chimeras which subsequently became so fashionable. However, the ideal of which he thought so much had at last assumed a living form. Octavie de Saint-Héliers so resembled it, that the young count did not miss a single reception at the Place Royale. On Shrove-Sunday he arrived very late, having, to his great regret, tarried a long while over a dinner in company with his cousin Henri, and other guardsmen of the Croy company, and he now feared that he would scarcely have time to say three words to the beautiful Octavie. The entertainments were generally over by twelve o'clock, for Saint-Héliers retired early. As a rule, the evening began by a reading, which

was followed by something more lively whenever there were some gay artists present and a sufficient number of "muses" to make up a quadrille. However, this seldom occurred; for most of the ladies were middle-aged, and most of the men pedantic writers. On arriving on this occasion, René saw at once that the first part of the entertainment was not yet over, for the servant, whose duty it was to announce the guests, said to him in a low tone, as he opened the door of the reception room: "I will not announce you, Monsieur le Comte. They are reading."

Some reading was indeed still going on. A majestic-looking dame with a red turban adorned with white feathers, and a yellow dress outrageously low about the neck, was enthroned in an arm-chair, in the classical attitude of Corinna at Misenna, and held in both of her hands, as though it had been a lyre, a folio, from which, in a stilted tone, she was reading the following remarkable passage from the last fashionable novel of the time.

"Not far from the den where he dwelt, squalid, rough, and rugged like a beast of prey, lived the young and lovely Elodie. Amid the raging storm and wind she had caught a glimpse of him, and his manly beauty had made her heart beat loudly. It was for her lute that she was searching, that lute forgotten but the evening before upon the arch of a bridge, and of finding it she now despaired, when suddenly a horrible rending sound was heard—"

This was as much as René could bear to hear. By the mere inversions he had recognised the author's style in all its eccentricity. The Viscount d'Arlincourt had just published *Le Solitaire*, which was already a great success, and Saint-Hélier had been anxious to entertain his guests with selections from this astounding production. Now René was in no nowise interested in the love affairs of Elodie, and he took his eyes off the lady reading to search for the chevalier's daughter. He caught sight of her at last, near a window not far from him, and quite alone, according to her usual custom, for she did not care to mix with the tiresome people of both sexes who met periodically in her father's rooms. She held them in but small esteem, and in flying from contact with vulgarity and affectation, she simply obeyed her natural instincts. Although the daughter of a man of doubtful nobility, she seemed born to sit upon a throne, for her manner and inclinations were regal indeed. Thus it was that she was feared rather than liked by the frequenters of the house. The women felt that she despised their pretensions to wit and style. The men realised that in her eyes they were ridiculous, and that she would prefer a handsome young cavalier to all the academicians on earth. They revenged themselves for her scorn by writing virulent epigrams about her in the retirement of their own apartments. Blue-stockings declared that she had no mind at all, and dressed badly.

It is true that she did not follow the fashions of the day, but dressed as she pleased; and did not cultivate either poetry or fine phrases, and never soiled her pretty fingers with ink. But she was admirably beautiful. Tall and slender, with superb shoulders, and arms like those of a Greek statue; her face was radiantly lovely, her complexion fair, of transparent, pearly whiteness, tinged now and then with a delicate flush, like that of Aurora when she rises. Her brow, which was like Parian marble, was topped by thick coils of hair, of the dark auburn tint so prized by painters of the Venetian school. Beneath this crown of brownish-gold there shone her eyes which looked like emeralds: large green eyes, with long lashes and arched

brows, eyes that were full of light and fire. When she closed them it seemed as though two stars had disappeared, and whenever she fixed them upon a man's face, he lowered his own.

Octavie's eyes were looking listlessly across the room, when René entered; at once they were turned upon him, and he felt as if pierced to his very heart. He howed from afar, but did not dare to approach, for fear of disturbing the enthusiasm which greeted M. d'Arlincourt's prose. Thunders of applause resounded at the end of a passage in which the joy of Elodie at recovering her lute, which the Solitaire had restored to her, was expressed in stilted and inverted phrases.

Saint-Héliér kept discreetly aloof at the further end of the room. He duly appreciated M. d'Arlincourt's writings, but preferred to talk over the politics of the day. He was speaking of the last sittings of the Chamber, and loudly expressed his approval of the views of the Duke de Richelieu, then president of the ministerial council. In the following year he would in a like manner sing the praises of M. de Villèle. Octavie's father always preferred those who enjoyed public favour. She was unlike him both in mind and person. She had no opinions except such as her feelings gave rise to. She did not listen to the fine phrases of the fashionable novel, and the future of the ministry was a matter of indifference to her. But she kept her eyes upon René de Brouage, and glances full of meaning were exchanged between them. "Why do you stay so far away?" said Octavie's sparkling orbs. "Because I am afraid of being remarked by your father's guests," replied René's more prudent glances. "What do I care for the people who are here? Come!" retorted Mademoiselle de Saint-Héliér's imperious gaze.

René, yielding to the magnetic influence of her eyes, then began to manœuvre so as to approach the window where Octavie had entrenched herself to keep the profane at a distance. He passed in and out among the chairs, and this was the easier from the fact that the reading was coming to an end. The groups of listeners were breaking up and reassembling round a harpsichord at the further end of the reception room. Saint-Héliér was about to afford his guests the pleasure of listening to a sentimental song written by Plantade, and set to music by Caraffa, and which, when sung in public in August of the following year, at the Opéra Comique, met with most stupendous success.

A virtuoso, whose neck was swathed with a stiff white cravat, whose hair waved above his forehead, and who pursed up his mouth in an affected manner, was about to sing the first notes of this simple air, and a scraggy woman was already exercising her fingers on the yellow keys of a harpsichord which at this very day is perhaps the delight of some country place.

As the moment when, after a deal of skilful turning and twisting, René succeeded in posting himself behind Octavie's chair, the singer attacked the first verse:

"Oh! who is it that swims athwart
The torrents that so swiftly flow?
Who, perched upon a jagged rock,
Defies the wildest winds that blow?"

"I have something to tell you," now said Mademoiselle de Saint-Héliér behind her fan.

"Forgive me, if I delayed so long," stammered René. "I was afraid that we should be remarked."

"You are too bashful. I should prefer to hear everybody say that we love one another."

The count said nothing, but turned pale.

"I wish everybody should say so," resumed Octavie, "because then, perhaps, my father would give up trying to force me—"

"Force you! Does he—"

"He wishes I should marry."

M. de Brouage did not reply. His emotion was stifling him.

"Listen to me, René," continued Mademoiselle de Saint-Héliér—she had never before called him René—"the decisive moment has come. I hate the man whom he wishes to force upon me—I hate him, and I love you."

"You love me!" exclaimed René distractedly, and he was about to add many impassioned protestations, but his voice was lost in the falsetto of the tenor yelping out a refrain which afterwards travelled round the world.

"It is the Solitaire :
He sees all,
He knows all,
He hears all,
He is everywhere !"

While this charming ritornello was being encored, Octavie abruptly asked, "What shall I do?"

"You must resist," said the young count at once.

"Resist! Why? The match proposed to me, is a good one. The man who yesterday asked for my hand is rich, and my father thinks highly of his good qualities. He would make an excellent husband. What motive have I for refusing the honour which he wishes to do me? I can bring forward but one—I might say that I am engaged; and indeed if I had exchanged vows with you, I swear to you, René, that neither my father's prayers nor his threats would make me yield. But I am going blindly through life in which but two paths are open to women, that of duty and that of happiness. Our happiness lies in self-sacrifice. We women long to say to a man: 'You are poor and I am rich; I am willing to endure poverty with you.' But if the man be wanting in courage and does not at once reply: 'I am ready; come!' if he is silent or hesitates, then, oh, then, we remember that in default of happiness we may find yet pleasure in life. Do you think that I scorn luxury, gaiety and social success? Do you think that I should not know how to console myself for having been forced to a marriage of reason by using the liberty which such a marriage would give me? I know what kind of a man I am intended to marry, and that he would never ask me to account for my actions if I consented to be his wife. It would depend upon me alone to receive you still."

Octavie said these last words in a husky voice, and then resumed with subdued feeling: "But if I did that, René, I should despise myself. What I should do, if I were sure of your love, would be to fly and break off forever with society, to live your life only."

This impassioned declaration was for a moment lost in the loud sounds which the emaciated performer drew from the harpsichord just as the vocalist was about to begin the second verse.

"Oh! who is it that casts a spell
Upon our flocks and lays them low?
Who chills the crops of hill and dell
Beneath a pall of driven snow?
Who slays the bear within his den?"

"However," bitterly resumed Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier when the storm of harmony was appeased, and the singer's soft strains were again audible; "it cannot be; it is but a foolish dream. Do I even know if you love me—"

"Love you!" ejaculated René. "Ah! I hoped that you knew that too well to doubt it. If I had dreamed that you would consent to share my poverty, I should not have waited so long to tell you what I did not dare to betray."

"And you, the Count de Brouage, the nephew of a peer of France; you, whose nobility dates back eight hundred years, you hesitate to enter the family of a mere nobleman, because you do not happen to be either an ambassador or a deputy, or even an officer of the king's household! Your love is timid indeed!"

"I am poor, have no prospects, and without my uncle's help I—"

"You would be condemned to live in retirement in an old château in the provinces. I know that, and I should be glad if you were forced to do so. I should no longer be willing to marry you if the Marquis de Brouage lost his son, for you would then inherit his peerage, and you might believe that I did not love you for yourself alone."

"You have nothing like that to fear. For a peerage to come down in an indirect line, there must be a royal order, and the king is free to choose at his own pleasure."

"Oh!" said Octavie, with a smile, "I know that I shall never be a peeress, and that is why I ask you to reply to me. Do you wish that I should betroth myself to you?"

"I beg you to take me as your affianced lover!" exclaimed the young count.

"Take care! The promise which we exchange will not be one of those unmeaning ties which are so common in gay society. From this moment, René, I am yours and you are mine, no matter what may happen."

"No matter what may happen," repeated M. de Brouage, gravely.

"Ah! I'm very happy," murmured Octavie, pressing her hand to her heart. And her eyelashes, sweeping over her beautiful eyes, became wet with tears. "Now," said she, in a voice which no longer trembled, "you must leave me. That stupid song is about to cease, and my father, who is looking at us from the other end of the room, will come here to me. I don't want you to say anything to him to-night. I will tell him to-morrow what I have made up my mind to do, and I will tell you what I shall expect from you. But I want you to go now to prevent all remarks and explanations."

René was too greatly agitated to reply. He saw, besides, that Saint-Hélier was gradually approaching his daughter, and he was not sorry to avoid an embarrassing meeting. He bowed respectfully to the fair Octavie and retreated in the direction of the door, which he succeeded in reaching without being noticed, thanks to Plantade's poetry and Caraffa's music.

"It is the Solitaire:
He sees all—"

This terrible refrain followed the young count to the ante-room, where he paused to put on his cloak.

A moment later, he was on the Place Royale, and, as there was no vehicle waiting for him, he decided to walk home. Little did he imagine what the whim would cost him. The weather, however, was dry and suited

to walking. Besides, René did not feel how fresh the March air was. Lovers are utterly indifferent to the weather when they know that their affection is reciprocated.

Five months previously, the young Count de Brouage had for the first time seen Octavie de Saint-Hélier at a great ball given by the city of Paris, on the occasion of the birth of the Duke de Bordeaux,* and the passion which he felt for her dated from that chance meeting. He went but little into society; he was a reserved and melancholy man. He had read many of Chateaubriand's works, and seen little of women. He was thus ready to fall desperately in love, and much more likely than his gay cousin to do so, despite all the latter had said. A week after this chance meeting he had obtained an introduction to Saint-Hélier, who always received young men of good family with cordiality, and a month later he was wildly in love with Octavie, who thoroughly understood his feelings.

Women are never mistaken as to the love they inspire, and the most unsophisticated of them know how to read the masculine heart as though it were an open book. But although Octavie appeared to be gratified by the attentions of M. de Brouage, she abstained from encouraging him by any kind of coquetry, limiting herself to unveiling, little by little, all the treasures of her mind, her attractive wit, serious disposition, manly in some respects, and yet full of feminine allurements. She was slow in betraying her ardent nature, and in suffering René to read what her emerald eyes revealed so well. She seemed to struggle against an irresistible impulse, and only to yield in spite of herself to feelings at variance with reason. The more reserved she became, the more the count endeavoured to win her confidence, so that the struggle, in which Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier had every advantage, advanced further than René had at first intended. He soon let her understand that he wished to marry her, and the manner in which this declaration was received completely turned his head. Octavie did not show the least surprise, and scorned all affectation. She did not even hide from him that she was highly flattered by his indirect offer. In a word, she was frank and simple, and René saw that the time was coming when he would have to take a decisive step.

His situation was a trying one, for his social standing was different to Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier's, and he could not, without compromising her, continue to pay her attentions which had already given rise to remark. On the other hand, he could not think, without a kind of terror, of the step which he was obliged to take. He had only a small estate and old manor as his fortune. This property had not yet been divided between his brother Fabien and himself, and the latter spent almost all of the income it yielded, being as great a spendthrift as René was the reverse. The young count was thus entirely dependent upon his uncle, the Marquis de Brouage, who had undertaken to bring him forward as a diplomatist.

Now, this nobleman had the most stubborn views imaginable as to marriage. He had, in former days, regilt his own escutcheon by an alliance with a rich woman, but he had not lowered himself in doing so, for the defunct marchioness could have proved her right to become a canoness in all the noble chapters of Germany, where quarterings are a serious matter. The general had not fallen in with any of the new views when he had served Napoleon, so he would naturally oppose his nephew's marriage with the daughter of a man of equivocal standing.

For René had made inquiries in vain; no one was able to tell him any-

* Subsequently known as the Count de Chambord.—*Trans.*

thing about the antecedents or even the present life of M. de Saint-Hélier. This more or less noble chevalier had the look and manners of a man of good family, and his establishment was well kept up. But where had he come from? Whence did he derive his income? Had he any estates of his own, or did he live on money paid him by government? Whence came the many decorations displayed upon the breast of his coat? M. de Brouage had, it is needless to say, abstained from questioning Octavie on so delicate a subject. She had several times given him to understand that her father, having formerly held a confidential position in connection with the Bourbon princes when the latter where in exile, owed a part of his fortune to services rendered them abroad. But this information was somewhat vague, and it was difficult to verify it.

René could, therefore, only expect his uncle's curse if he took it into his head to lower himself by marrying Octavie. He need not dream of winning the consent of so obstinate a man. His uncle had set ways, was accustomed to govern his family as firmly as he had formerly commanded the 9th Dragoons, and was utterly unpoetical, looking upon love as an absurdity, and upon all men who did not belong to his own social sphere as the scum of the earth. Moreover, the unhappy lover could not even count upon the approval of his cousin Henri, who, having heard of his infatuation as regards the fair Octavie, had tormented him on all occasions about it; nor would he even have that of his cousin Antoinette. Cousins, even when they are the daughters of a peer of France, never approve of their relatives' love for strangers who are courted in their stead.

It was thus evident that René, to keep the engagement which he had taken upon himself, would have to surmount obstacles sufficient to appal any man less deeply in love than he was. But he now no longer belonged to himself, and he resolved to bear the consequences of the engagement he had entered into.

He was, after all, his own master, free to renounce all ambitious views, and to content himself with mere happiness. Life, shared with the object of his passion in the retirement of the country, seemed to him likely to prove a paradise on earth. He had full faith in Octavie, and believed that she loved him to such a degree that she would never regret social triumphs or sigh for riches, or the gay life of Paris. And he thus went on dreaming blissful dreams, thinking of the adorable lips which had just spoken the words, "I love you," and of the eyes whose last rays still seemed to burn his heart.

He walked straight on, without noticing what streets he took. He had crossed the Place Royale, and turned into the first thoroughfare that he saw before him. He lived in some quiet rooms in the Rue d'Artois, at the corner of the Rue de Provence, and his most direct route was along the Boulevard; however, he had unwittingly fallen into an entanglement of narrow, winding streets. He turned at haphazard to right or left, and at last he realised that he no longer knew his whereabouts. In 1821, Paris was very badly lighted. Gas had been introduced three years before; but the first attempt having proved a failure, the old oil lamps were still in use, and these were suspended from ropes swung across the street from posts beside the houses. These lamps gave but little light, and often went out entirely. By their feeble rays it was difficult to discern the names of the streets at the corners, especially as they had been almost effaced during the Revolution, and, not having been repainted, were now scarcely legible.

René finally came to the conclusion that he must have retraced his steps

instead of progressing, for he found himself in front of a high wall, which he remembered having passed some fifteen minutes before. As he did not wish to wander about till daybreak, he stopped and tried to find out where he was. But it is easier to find one's way upon the trackless ocean, than to discover the north when one is lost on a dark night in certain parts of Paris. The sky was cloudy, and not a star was to be seen. The young count had a garden wall before him, and a row of dark, dismal houses in the rear. Not a light at any window, not a passer-by in the street. It was now two in the morning, and the Carnival did not prevent the quiet citizens who lived in there from going to bed early.

René at last made up his mind to go on until he met with some belated individual who could tell him which direction to take. He thought that he could not be far from his first starting point, but he did not remember having ever seen the labyrinth of narrow streets and blind alleys in which he found himself. Whenever he went to the Place-Royale or returned home, he usually took a hackney coach, and as on his way he thought all the time of his love affairs, he never noticed through what streets he passed.

So memory could not serve him, and he was obliged to trust to heaven to send him a guide. Skirting the garden wall, he at last came to a street entirely unlighted, and he was asking himself whether he had better turn into this street or not, when it seemed to him that he discerned a human form. Most men would have walked off to avoid attack, and with all the more reason, as at that time of night, attacks were very frequent in Paris, and the police could not be relied upon for assistance. The force subsequently known as the sergents-de-ville was not yet organised, and night patrols were made by the national guard.

Now, the citizen soldiers were not very watchful guardians of the safety of the city. But the count was utterly fearless, and did not hesitate an instant in walking in the direction in which he had fancied he could espy a man. He found that he had not been mistaken, and that some one whom he might question was approaching, but the individual, just as he was about to speak to him, drew back as though he did not wish to be accosted. "Excuse me," said René, calling out to him, "a word with you if you please. Can you tell me where I am, and which way I ought to take to reach the Boulevard? I have lost my way in coming from the Place Royale and I wish to find the Rue d'Artois."

At these words, the man stopped and turned towards the count, but without evincing any desire to speak with him. To re-assure him, René stopped also and waited till the stranger chose to approach. He saw that this night-wanderer wore a kind of box-coat, and a hat with a broad crown; but the darkness prevented him from seeing his features. "You must be a foreigner to lose yourself in Paris?" said the stranger as he came nearer.

"No," replied René, somewhat surprised at being questioned instead of receiving an answer. "However, I am not in the least acquainted with this neighbourhood, and you would greatly oblige me by telling me how to get out of it."

"I am not a commissionaire."

"No. But you might give me some help."

The man hesitated, and finally growled: "You are in the Rue de la Tixeranderie, not far from the Hôtel de Ville."

"The deuce I am! Then I am still further from my destination than I thought. To go towards the Hôtel de Ville, when a fellows wants to find

the Boulevard des Italiens, is a big blunder and no mistake, and I don't understand how I made it. No matter ! I am obliged to you, sir, and if you will tell me which way I should turn, I—"

"You must go up that street and turn to your left, then to your right, and then to your left again, then take the fourth street on the left and that will bring you to the Rue Saint-Martin, and when once you are there—"

"But I cannot understand all that !" exclaimed René ; "it is too complicated."

A moment of silence ensued, and then the man resumed in a much softer tone :

"I am sorry not to be able to guide you, but I am taking care of my brother who has had a fall."

"A fall ?"

"Yes. He is subject to fits. When they come on he remains for an hour or so unconscious. There is only one thing to be done, and that is to take him to the Hôtel Dieu hospital where the doctors bring him round."

"Why don't you take him there ?"

"Because I am unluckily alone. I usually have my servant to help me. She is as strong as a horse. But she has gone to keep the Carnival at Montmartre, and while she is dancing, my poor brother may die. The last time he was taken like this the doctor said the next attack might stifle him if he were not attended to at once."

"This is a trying situation, indeed. You live in one of these houses, then ? The ill man is there, I suppose ?"

"We live here," said the stranger, pointing to a roof which René could barely see. "My brother and I live on a little income we have, and reside on the ground floor. It is convenient, for when he has a seizure, there is no staircase to mount. I place him in a sedan-chair which I bought for that purpose, and with my servant, Javotte, I take him to the Hôtel Dieu, which is not far from here. But I don't know what to do to-night. I have put the poor fellow into the chair, but it takes two to carry it."

"Well, sir," replied René, who was very kind-hearted, "I am quite willing to help you. Do you wish me to go for a doctor ? If you know of one in this neighbourhood, tell me where he lives and I will fetch him."

"No ; that is of no use," said the stranger. "No one understands the complaint that my brother suffers from, and can treat him properly, excepting the surgeon of the Saint-Pierre Ward. Besides, doctors charge high, and we are not rich. Ah ! if I had only had some neighbour at hand ; but there are only two other tenants besides ourselves, and they have both gone to frolic at La Courtille."

The count thought a moment over the strange situation, and felt sorry for the poor fellow's plight. He would have been glad to help him ; but, on the other hand, he was desirous of getting home. He ended, however, by saying to himself that a good act is always rewarded, and that to end so happy a night in proper style, he could not do better than to help a poor fellow creature. "Well," said he, "I will take your servant's place."

"What !" exclaimed the stranger, "would you do that ? A fine gentleman like you—for you are a gentleman. I see by your dress that you have been at a fashionable ball somewhere."

"True ; I have just been to a ball, and I was very much vexed just now at not finding a hackney-coach to take me home. But I don't regret it,

as my bad luck enables me to do you a service. Where is the chair you speak of?"

"Over there, two steps from here. But how can I thank you? Ah! when we have left my brother at the hospital, I will myself take you to the Rue d'Artois."

"That would be quite unnecessary. When I see the Hôtel Dieu, I shall not need a guide. You will have set me on my road, although by a round-about way. But let us start, if you please, for I must admit that I shall be glad to find myself at home."

"And minutes are hours to me with my poor brother in this sad state. Come, sir, Heaven sent you to me! We have but twenty minutes to walk, at the utmost."

René followed the stranger, who soon brought him to the place where the sedan-chair stood. In 1821, in certain provincial towns, these chairs were still used to take people to balls, and even in Paris this old-fashioned mode of conveyance had not altogether been abandoned. The chair in which the invalid was shut up, dated at least from the reign of Louis XV., for it was sorely dilapidated. Its owner had, no doubt, found it at some auction-room, and had neglected to have it repaired. Still, to shelter his brother, who used it so often, he had closed it carefully everywhere. The doors were shut, and the curtains of the windows drawn. Everything was ready for the bearers to start, and the stranger at once placed himself in front of René, saying: "I had better lead the way, as you don't know these streets. Take the poles behind, and raise the chair carefully when I give you the word."

"Don't you wish to look in, and see how your brother is?"

"What good would that do? I know all about his attacks. There is nothing to be done, and if I open the door the cold may kill him. Are you ready, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then let us raise the chair. There! that is it. Let's start."

M. de Brouage obeyed all these directions. He had made up his mind to accomplish the charitable task which he had undertaken, and allowed himself to be led on, but not without a smile at the thought of the strange appearance which he must present carrying this chair in full evening dress. He thought the invalid somewhat heavy, but remarked to himself: "Fortunately, the journey won't be a long one."

Meanwhile, the brother of the sick man stepped along lightly and firmly, and without hesitating as to which street to take whenever they came to a crossing. He was evidently following a pre-determined route, and the neighbourhood seemed familiar to him. René, on the contrary, looked in vain at the inscriptions over the shop fronts, and tried to make out the names of the streets, whenever the yellow signs became visible, but he could not discover where he was. There were always the same narrow streets, the same squat dark buildings, the same bad pavement and filthy gutters, and the same dull lanterns. At that time Paris was still much as it had been during the Revolution, that is, one of the ugliest cities in the world. However, the young count was surprised at seeing so many mean streets, one after the other, and finally began to wonder whether he was not going round and round the same block of buildings, just as the soldiers at the Cirque-Olympique went behind the scenes, and round to the front again, in plays where there was any military display. He was surprised, also, at walking so long without coming to any public square, church,

fountain, or landmark, of any kind whatever. The stranger had said that the Hôtel de Ville was near by, but as yet there were no signs of it.

"I certainly know nothing about topography," thought René; "I know no more where I am than if I were in Pekin."

Once, however, it seemed to him that he recognised a name painted up in conspicuous letters over a shop, a name which he had already read but a few moments before. "This is strange!" he said to himself, "I thought we had already passed this place. I am inclined to believe that this man has lost his way just as I did. Is he a citizen of Paris? He wears a box-coat like coachmen are beginning to wear. I scarcely caught sight of his face. He talks like other people, but with a southern accent, it seemed to me. But no matter! I am doing an act of charity; still charity has its limits, and if we meet someone going by, I shall ask him to take my place."

While he was pondering thus, he heard a sound of voices and a regular footfall. It came from some little distance off, but grew gradually louder.

"That'll suit me," muttered the young count. "A merry party from some public ball. These good fellows won't refuse to help the poor chap in the chair."

"You must be tired. Let us rest awhile," said the brother of the invalid, stopping, and setting down the chair.

"I am quite willing," replied René. "I must admit that I should be greatly obliged to anyone who would take my place."

"I can understand that," said the man, at once, "and I will try to find someone to do so. I hear some people over there, laughing and talking. They will be sure to oblige us, but they may pass by without seeing us. I will run and meet them. Have the kindness to remain here, and don't desert my poor brother. I will return immediately with help."

And without waiting for the young count's reply, the stranger started off and vanished round the first corner. M. de Brouage, well pleased by this turn of affairs, waited patiently for the return of the companion whom chance had placed in his way, and whose society he had endured for half an hour out of pure kindness of heart. He thought for a moment of opening the door of the sedan-chair, to see how the invalid had borne the journey, but remembered that he was unconscious, and could not require his services as he had not yet revived. Besides, the voices and footsteps were coming nearer and nearer. It was evident that the invalid's brother had induced some people to help him, and was returning with them. Indeed, René soon saw in the distance a lantern which was oscillating some two feet above the pavement, carried by a man walking ahead of several others, who were armed. Their guns shone in the light shed by the lantern, and their white shoulder-belts showed plainly against the dark background of their uniforms. The count at once realised that a patrol of the national guard was coming up, and was glad to meet with them; for these citizen soldiers would not refuse to render service to a fellow Parisian in distress. However, he said to himself at the same time: "How strange that my companion has not returned with them!"

"Halt!" suddenly called out a deep bass voice.

The patrol stopped as ordered, and the voice resumed in deeper tones than before:

"Who goes there?"

"A friend," replied M. de Brouage.

"Come forward!" thundered the terrible voice.

René was well aware that the national guard of that time was fond of playing at soldiers, and although greatly inclined to laugh at this burlesque of the real thing, he obeyed the injunction. He found himself face to face with a fat man in a uniform which was much too small for his corpulent figure, and wearing a three-cornered hat. There were various cross belts upon the breast of this grotesque warrior, a short sword was knocking against his calves, and his stripes showed him to be a corporal. His stomach protruded, and his ruddy face, framed by thick whiskers, shone with perfect self-satisfaction. "I am glad to meet you and your men, sir," said René, "for I am helping a person, whom I met in the Rue de la Tixeranderie, and I wish—

"If you met him in the Rue de la Tixeranderie, you have not gone far with him, for you are still there."

"That's impossible! We have been walking about for the last three-quarters of an hour."

"Pacing up and down then. In what way are you helping the person you met?"

"Did he not tell you?"

"You must be joking, young man. I have not even seen him."

"I cannot understand that! He just left me to go and meet you, and asked me to wait for him here. He assured me that he would return with someone else."

"What for?"

"To take his brother, who is very ill, to the Hôtel Dieu hospital."

"Young man, I assure you that we met no one. You have, undoubtedly, come across somebody who has made game of you by running off."

"I cannot believe that. The sick man is in the sedan-chair over there."

"I will ascertain that, and if there is really anyone suffering, I will take it upon myself to place two of my men at your disposal, to carry the unfortunate fellow to the asylum, open to those who are ill. The service will suffer, no doubt, but the rights of humanity are sacred. Private Brassicourt, light the way with your lantern."

"Coming, Daddy Boulardot, coming!"

"There is no Daddy Boulardot here! Call me corporal."

The soldier shrugged his shoulders, and went towards the sedan-chair, around which his companions had already gathered. The majestic corporal also advanced with his gun shouldered.

René did not follow him. He did not wish to see the painful spectacle which the distorted face and limbs of the epileptic sufferer must present. He was thinking of the strange disappearance of the unfortunate fellow's brother, and longed to get away.

Meantime Private Brassicourt had opened the door, and held up his lantern to inspect the interior of the chair. "This is very odd!" cried he. "This man in here isn't ill, he's dead!"

"It isn't possible," muttered Boulardot.

"It is as I say, and he did not come to his death by natural causes, either. He has been killed. Look for yourself."

The corporal looked, and in an agitated tone, exclaimed: "It is, indeed, true! The unfortunate fellow is half undressed and covered with blood. He must have been wounded in the head or the neck."

"And he is a soldier," added one of the national guards; "his sword and tunic are between his legs."

"What does all this mean?" asked René de Brouage, coming quickly forward.

He wished to see whether he had in fact been unwittingly carrying a corpse. But Boulardot threw himself upon him, took him by the collar, and began to shake him, crying out: "It means, you villain, that you are a murderer! You killed this unfortunate man!"

"You must be mad!" said the count, scornfully, as he rid himself of his adversary with the utmost ease.

"Seize him, guards!" called out the corporal, in a tone of voice and with a gesture that would not have been amiss at the *Comédie Française*.

"I have no intention of going off, I assure you," said René.

He spoke in vain. The guard did not venture to lay hands upon him, but they surrounded him, and crossed their bayonets. The count saw that it would be absurd to embark on a struggle in which he would not be successful. It was better to justify himself; and this he began to do. "Don't you realise," said he, "that if I had killed a man, I should not have been such a fool as to wait for the watch to come up, especially as I heard you coming?"

The argument was so obviously true that Corporal Boulardot was impressed by it. "I went forward to meet you," resumed René.

"Because you did not think that we should look into the sedan-chair," growled Boulardot.

"You forget that I asked you at once for one or two of your men to help me to carry the sick man to the *Hôtel Dieu*."

"That proves nothing. You meant to give them the slip on the way."

"It would have been much easier to have gone off before you came up, like the man who got me into this scrape."

"Well, you can tell all this to the commissary of police," replied Boulardot.

"What!" exclaimed the young count, angrily; "do you mean to arrest me—to give me up to the police?"

"Are you surprised at it? You astonish me. I find you mounting guard over a corpse, and you imagine that you will get away by telling me a ridiculous story. This is really too much!"

"You are right, corporal," said all the men, in a breath. "Let us take him to the *Rue de Jérusalem*."

"You would do better," replied René, "to take the poor soldier in the chair to some place where he can be attended to. He is, perhaps, not dead yet."

"He is quite cold," replied Brassicourt. "You must be well aware of that."

"No matter," replied the sagacious Boulardot. "We must not neglect anything. Two of you must carry the chair and the man to the headquarters of the legion. There must be a surgeon there. The other two must come with me and conduct the prisoner to the *Préfecture of Police*."

"You have made up your mind, then," said René, "to treat me as though I were a murderer?"

"It is my duty, young man, and I never trifle with duty."

"Take care! I warn you that you are making a serious mistake, and that I need only mention my name for the police to set me at liberty."

"Bah! what may your name be, if you please?"

"I am the Count de Brouage."

"Indeed! Well, I care nothing for that. Since the Revolution all

Frenchmen have been equal. That is written in the charter. You are a count, I am a druggist, but, as corporal of the national guard I represent the authorities, and I arrest you, count though you are, if, indeed, you really are one, for plenty of people take titles that don't belong to them."

"Very well," said René, becoming more and more irritated. "We shall see what my uncle, General de Brouage, will say to all this."

"The one who served in the cavalry under Napoleon?" asked Brassicourt.

"The same. He is a peer of France. He will know how to defend me from an absurd charge, and to punish the fellows who have dragged his nephew to a police station. Go on! I am quite ready to follow you."

"If I were sure that you were the general's nephew—"

"I will prove it to you at once. My uncle's house is on the Quai de Bourbon, in the Ile Saint-Louis. Will you take me there?"

"Yes, if you think that the general will consent to receive us at this late hour."

"He will get up, if necessary, and besides, he may not have retired, for he must have been at a ball to-night at the house of the Minister of War. It depends upon yourselves to avoid making a mistake which may have unpleasant consequences."

Boulardot was scratching his ear and seemed greatly perplexed, when his subordinate, Brassicourt, whispered: "In your place, I would do as the young man suggests. What do you risk? We are three of us here to keep watch over him on the way. The Quai de Bourbon is not far off, and if we see the general I shall know him at once. I served under him in *the other one's** time."

"It is a fact that this young man does not look like a criminal at all. He is a nobleman; and though I don't care for noblemen, I must be impartial, so, if his uncle will go bail for him—"

"His arms are long, and he would not forget your doing a kindness to one of his family—and, I say, Daddy Boulardot, he might help you in getting the cross that you have petitioned the King for."

"Hush!" whispered the ambitious corporal. And then, raising his voice, he said to René, "I consent to your request. My duty is to give you up to the law. I set it aside out of respect for your uncle. He is a brave man, and I honour brave men—honour and fatherland—such is my motto, and I will proclaim it before the general. I hope that he will understand the motive of my complying with your request."

"No doubt he will, sir," said the count, coldly; "but let us start, if you please, towards the Ile Saint-Louis. As you must understand, I long to put an end to this absurd business."

While this conversation was going on, the three national guards, who had not taken part in it, surrounded the sedan-chair, which their comrade Brassicourt had closed up again, and they showed no desire to touch the dead body of which they had barely caught a glimpse in the faint light from the lantern. The corporal did not care to behold it again, and René had not seen it at all, for he had been prevented from going near. Boulardot repeated his order to carry the dead man to the guard house of the Sixth Legion; and although the citizen-soldiers did not, perhaps, very willingly obey, for the task was far from pleasant, they eventually took up the poles of the chair and moved off.

"Above all," cried Boulardot, "mind you ask the officer at the guard house to wait for our return before making up his report. There will be a

* Meaning Napoleon I.—*Trans.*

talk about this affair, gentlemen, and I wish that we should have the honour of helping to clear it up." So speaking, the corporal placed himself on René's right, and Brassicourt placed himself on his left. A soldier, with the lantern, followed, and they all set off together, while the bearers of the sedan-chair went in the direction of the Rue Saint-Martin.

Now-a-days not the faintest vestige remains of the Rue de la Tixeranderie, which then extended to the north of the Hôtel de Ville, parallel with the Seine, on ground where part of the Rue de Rivoli now runs. To reach the Ile Saint-Louis, the route, at that time, was somewhat round-about. The Louis-Philippe bridge did not then exist, so that the count and his companions had to cross the water by the Pont Marie.

René was very angry, although he was not in the least anxious as to the final result of his singular adventure. He did not fear being seriously charged with being a murderer's accomplice, but he was enraged at being obliged to apply to his uncle to help him; especially at the very time when he would, perhaps, have serious difficulties with him as to his marriage. There was, unfortunately, no other means, however, of avoiding an arrest.

He was not inclined to speak, but the corporal, on the contrary, was only too anxious to indulge in questioning, and in pompous talk. "Do you know, young man," he began, "that this is a most extraordinary occurrence, especially if you are telling the truth, as I am willing to believe?"

"Very extraordinary, indeed," replied M. de Brouage, drily, "and I cannot undertake to explain it to you."

"I do not understand why this man, who, according to you, is the only culprit, should have applied to you, whom he did not know, and have asked you to help him."

"It was probably because he could not carry the chair alone."

"He could have left it standing in the street, where he had set it down."

"Corporal," said Brassicourt, "you were never intended to be an investigating magistrate. What! can't you see that the rascal was in front of the house where he had committed the murder, and that he wished to carry the dead body as far away from it as possible?"

"I don't know whether I should have succeeded as a magistrate or not," replied Boulardot, tartly, "but I know that your mode of reasoning is not worth a straw. The criminal must have guessed that this gentleman would be able to find the house again."

"You are mistaken," said René; "I don't think that I should recognize it. I remember a blind alley, a long wall, and a dark roof. It would be impossible for me to describe the place any better than that. The man threw me off the track by making me turn round and round along numberless little streets in a neighbourhood where I had never been before. If he applied to me, it was simply because he was aware that I had lost my way, and did not know where I was."

"He told you a monstrous lie when he said that you were in the Rue de la Tixeranderie, for that is where you were when we arrested you, and you had been helping to carry the sedan-chair for half an hour," cried Brassicourt, who was disposed to side with the nephew of his former commanding officer.

"No matter how that may be, young man, you would have had an unpleasant time of it if you had fallen into other hands than ours," said Boulardot, drawing himself up.

"I am greatly obliged to you for giving me an opportunity to justify myself," replied the count in a tone that put a stop to the conversation.

The corporal, somewhat vexed, now maintained a dignified silence while keeping closer than ever to his prisoner. No fresh incident occurred on their way to the Quai de Bourbon. The general's house was at the further end of the Ile Saint-Louis, in front of the Cité, and flanked by extensive gardens, on which ten six-storeyed houses have since been built. This noble dwelling had—before the Revolution—belonged to a president of the Paris Parliament, the grandfather on the maternal side of the present Marquis de Brouage whose two nephews had resided there on their arrival in Paris. René was still in the habit of going there frequently. He knew his uncle's servants and their habits, and felt somewhat concerned as, to the strange appearance he would present, arriving at three in the morning with a squad of the national guard as an escort. It chanced, however, that just as he reached the house, thus escorted, the marquis's carriage, coming from the Faubourg Saint-Germain by the Pont de la Tournelle, passed the corner of the Quai de Bourbon and drew up. "The door, if you please," called out the coachman from his box.

By the light of the carriage-lamps and through the windows, René saw his uncle in full uniform, whilst beside him, wrapped in a furred cloak, sat his charming cousin, Antoinette de Brouage. Greatly impressed by the splendour of the equipage, Boulardot made a military salute and Brassicourt presented arms.

The window of the carriage was lowered at once and the marquis showed his face. René did not wait to be questioned. "Uncle," said he, stepping forward, "I beg pardon for appearing at such an hour, but I am obliged to appeal to you, as I have just been arrested."

"Arrested!" exclaimed Mademoiselle de Brouage, in alarm.

"Oh, don't be frightened, cousin," said René, who would have been only too glad if the marquis's daughter had not been present. "It is a mere mistake, and I shall not detain my uncle a moment."

"You will explain this singular performance at once, I hope?" said the general sternly. Then changing his mind, he added: "Tell my coachman to drive in, and follow the carriage."

The young count realised that M. de Brouage did not wish that his daughter should hear the explanation of what might be some doubtful adventure, and indeed he was not sorry to escape relating his mishaps in the presence of Mademoiselle Antoinette. His charming cousin had turned pale on seeing him standing between two soldiers who seemed anxious not to lose sight of him, and she now looked at her father without daring to question him.

"This is incomprehensible indeed!" said the marquis to her while the carriage passed through the arched entrance-way. "Here is René under arrest, as though he were a burglar or a vagabond, and the national guard, too; it is shameful! If it were his good-for-nothing brother, I should be less surprised, and I dare say, that Fabien has something to do with this unpleasant affair, unless indeed, it concerns Henri; for my son is by no means steady, and I'll wager that he has not yet come home. But there is no need of your being present at the lecture that I shall give René."

"Don't scold him too much, I beg," said the young girl.

"Are you going to take his part? Go to your room, mademoiselle, and let me deal with the bad fellow as he deserves."

The carriage drew up under the arched entrance in front of the grand stair-

case. A footman had opened the door, and let down the steps of the carriage. Mademoiselle de Brouage alighted alone and followed her maid, who was standing ready in the hall ; but she turned round more than once before she reached the first floor. It was evident that she was very anxious, and would have liked René to re-assure her by a glance.

Meantime the marquis had sprung out of the carriage with all the agility of youth, the vehicle rolled on into the court-yard in the rear, and Boulardot came forward followed by his two subordinates and his prisoner.

"It is indeed my old colonel," said Brassicourt, in a whisper. "His hair has grown a trifle grey since the battle of Wagram, but he is as straight as he was when he commanded the 9th Dragoons."

Brassicourt did not flatter M. de Brouage. The brave officer was not yet sixty, and did not look fifty ; especially when he was in uniform, as was now the case. He was tall, with broad shoulders and a slim waist, quite free from that stoutness which is so often the lot of the finest cavalry officers at the age they have won commanders' epaulets. His manly, haughty countenance was unwrinkled, his teeth were, as he himself was wont to say, "all ready for service," and his eyes had lost none of their brightness. He was at once warrior and nobleman, a courtier and a soldier. Indeed his demeanour and carriage were such as to abash those who approached him, and Boulardot, who had intended to deliver an explanatory discourse, was so much intimidated, that he forgot what he meant to say.

"Who are you?" asked M. de Brouage, in an imperious tone. "To what company do you belong? Why have you arrested my nephew?"

The unfortunate Boulardot could only stammer out some unintelligible words, and Brassicourt was obliged to come to the rescue. "General," said he, without showing much embarrassment, "the corporal is a druggist in the Rue Aumaire, I am a saddler in the Rue Chapon, and I had the honour of serving in your regiment from 1807 to 1814."

"Aha !" said the marquis, drawing himself up at this reminder, "that's proper ! I like to find old soldiers among the national guard, and I should be glad if many of them were there."

"There are at least a hundred old troopers in our legion, the sixth. You may know our colonel, the Marquis de Fragnier?"

"I know him very well indeed, I just saw him at the minister's house."

"Well, general, Monsieur de Fragnier can tell you that we are respectable men, and that we have only arrested this gentleman because our duty obliged us to do so. We were on patrol when we met him mounting guard over a sedan-chair in the Rue de la Tixeranderie. He asked us where he was. That seemed suspicious to us. So the corporal questioned him, and one of the men looked into the sedan-chair where he saw a dead man who seemed to have been murdered."

"Murdered !" exclaimed the general, looking at his nephew.

"I believe it, uncle," said René, "as these gentlemen declare it to be so. As for myself, I have not seen the body. But what happened is this. I dined and spent the evening with Henri and two other guardsmen of the Croy company of the King's guard, who went away about eleven. My cousin accompanied me to the door of a house where I was invited."

"And he did not say where he was going, when he left you?"

"No, uncle," replied René, with some little hesitation. He did not wish to inform M. de Brouage that Henri had told him that he meant to spend the night at a gambling house.

"The house where I remained till quite late is on the Place-Royale," re-

sumed the young count. "When I left, I took it into my head to walk home. I lost my way, and in wandering about the streets I met with a man who offered to put me in the right direction if I would help him to carry his brother, who was ill, to the Hôtel Dieu hospital."

"And you accepted the proposal? The deuce you did! You are only too obliging, and the whole affair would do you great honour if it were known in society."

"I have only too great reason to repent of my folly. These gentlemen take me for a murderer, and I fear that I have been helping a rascal."

"Who made off, leaving you as a hostage? Serves you right. How is it that you, who are a nobleman, can have consented to play the lackey in order to please a scamp whom you met at a street corner? It would have served you right, if the patrol had handed you over to the police."

"That would have been the case, uncle, if I had not mentioned your name."

"Very good; but you cannot suppose that the matter will end here. To-morrow all Paris will be talking of it, and I don't desire to have my name in the papers. You no doubt ordered the body to be taken to a police station?" asked the general, turning suddenly towards Boulardot, who had not yet summoned courage to speak.

"No, general," replied the ready Brassicourt; "the corporal thought it best to send it to the headquarters of our legion, at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers in the Rue Saint-Martin. The chief of the guardhouse has probably sent word to the commander of the City of Paris, for the dead man was a soldier."

"A soldier!" exclaimed the general. "Are these attacks upon soldiers about to begin again? It is a serious matter, very serious indeed, and something should be done to prevent it. Besides, I must at once take measures to prevent this disagreeable affair from being noised abroad. So pray get into the carriage with my nephew and me, and we will first go to the guard-house. I wish to find out what regiment this brave soldier belonged to. He has doubtless been killed by some of the King's enemies. I will then go to headquarters and to the Prefecture of Police, so as to stop, if I can, any unpleasant scandal."

Then, calling a footman, who stood at a respectful distance, the marquis bade him instruct the coachman to bring the carriage round. The horses had not yet been unharnessed.

"General," said Brassicourt, after glancing at his two companions, "there are three of us, and we should be very much in your way. Since this gentleman is your nephew, we need not keep guard over him, and if you take him with you, we will go to the guard-house on foot. You will be there first, but you have only to show yourself, and the officer on duty will place himself at your disposal."

"I thank you, gentlemen, for relying upon me to clear up this business," replied the marquis in a courteous tone, in which there was a tinge of irony. "I shall see you again presently, and I will manage matters in such a way that you will not regret having departed from orders by intrusting me with your prisoner, for whom I will be answerable."

The carriage was now ready. M. de Bronage entered it with René, making a friendly gesture to the men, who saluted him; the house door opened and the two superb Normandy horses bore the uncle and nephew away at a full trot.

"Now, sir, I restrained myself before these men," said the marquis, "but at present, I can tell you what I think of your conduct."

"I assure you, uncle, that I have told you the truth; I do not know the wretch who killed this soldier and—"

"This is a little too much! Do you suppose that I believe you to be the accomplice of a murderer? If I thought you capable of having dishonoured our name, I should have already blown out your brains. What blood have you in your veins that you justify yourself as to an infamous crime of which I don't accuse you, instead of simply apologising for having made us both ridiculous by your outrageous imprudence?"

"I admit that I did very wrong, and I bitterly regret the annoyance I am causing you, but I still hope that it may be possible to avoid any mention of your name in this fatal affair."

"I hope so, indeed! A fine figure I should cut at the Chamber of Peers, if it were known that my nephew were to be summoned as a witness, in a criminal affair! Yes, sir, I will get you out of the absurd scrape in which you have involved yourself. I must do so. But it will not be easy. This murder of a soldier must be the work of some secret society. Count Anglès, the Prefect of Police, told me lately, that fresh conspiracies had been started. It seems that there are men coming every day to Paris, men who belong to a new society formed in Italy, and called the Carbonari."

"No one will accuse me of belonging to it," said René, softly.

"No, but I would not say as much for your brother. I hear that he goes about among liberals and stuffs his head full of Utopian and revolutionary ideas. It is, no doubt, for that reason, that I never see him now. You do not share his absurd fancies I know, but the life you lead is not suitable for a man of your birth. You never are seen at the Tuileries nor with the princes. You scarcely even visit Baron Pasquier, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It looks as if you purposely avoided the society of people of position, and on the other hand it appears you associate freely with folks who can only compromise you."

"I go nowhere, uncle. I like solitude, and I live a retired life."

"Except when you go to a ball, as to-night, for instance. Where did you spend this evening, which has had such a pleasant ending?"

"At Monsieur de Saint-Hélér's," replied the young count, with no little embarrassment.

"That is a noble house, I must say! Who is this Saint-Hélér? Is he a rich merchant or an intriguer?"

René hung his head and reflected that clearly enough he would have to break off with his uncle if he married Octavie.

"You have introduced your cousin Henri to this lord of Saint-Hélér, of course?" said the marquis in a bantering tone.

"Henri does not know him. He could have gone to the reception to-night; but he did not seem inclined to do so, and I did not urge him."

"Oh! I'll wager that he did no better than you, and wouldn't like to tell me where he went. He has been neglecting duty lately. I must tell him to-morrow what I think of his behaviour. But here we are at the Arts-et-Métiers guard-house. You will oblige me by not saying anything unless I question you. If I did not manage this matter, you would make no end of blunders. Let me arrange it as I see fit. Those men of the national guard are ridiculous, but they respect a general's uniform. They won't venture to contradict me, and when I have seen the body of the man who has been killed, I will take you to headquarters. The commander is a friend of mine, and I am his superior, as he is only a major-general. He will undertake to prevent your being brought forward."

While René was warmly thanking his uncle, the carriage stopped before the guard-house. The door was open, and a deal of noise and bustling was going on inside where a score of guardsmen were talking earnestly. The sentinel himself had left his box to speak to his comrades, and before the general's arrival could be signalled, he was able to alight from his carriage and enter the building. René, who followed his uncle, was at once recognised by the two men who had carried the sedan-chair. The general, thanks to his stars, crosses, and ribands, did not need to name himself. The commanding officer came forward to meet him.

"Lieutenant," said M. de Brouage, "I have come here to explain a misunderstanding, and to answer for my nephew. Your corporal was satisfied with my word, but I wished to see you myself."

"I am greatly honoured, general," replied the officer, "and very happy to receive you, for I am in the greatest embarrassment."

"I can understand that. You do not know what to do with the body of this unfortunate soldier. It was a soldier who was killed, I am told."

"No, general; one of the royal body guard."

"One of the royal body guard!"

"Yes, of the Croy company. I saw that by his white shoulder-belt."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed René, suddenly seized with a horrible pre-sentiment.

"Where is he?" asked M. de Brouage, almost as much overcome as his nephew.

"Here, general," replied the officer, pushing back the national guards who had gathered around. "The body is in the same position as when it was brought here. I forbade it being touched."

The marquis and René walked forward together. The sedan-chair stood at the end of the room; the door was open, and the light of a lantern, placed upon a table near by, fell full upon the dead man's face.

"It is he!" muttered the count, fairly terrified.

"Henri!" cried the general, and he staggered back, for he had recognized his own son.

II.

ON the morrow of that sad night, when the young and dashing heir to a peerage had so mysteriously lost his life, the house where M. de Brouage resided had assumed an aspect of mourning. The windows were closed, as well as the entrance through which at dawn a squad of the national guard had borne the bloody corpse of young Count Henri. The general had had no difficulty in obtaining possession of his son's remains, and the inquiry concerning this tragic death was carried on at his house.

Corporal Boulardot had certainly ventured to make some timid objections, talking of the responsibility which fell upon him, and growling about the equality of all Frenchmen in the eyes of the law. But the officer in command at the guard-house had taken upon himself to comply with the wishes of the marquis, who had promised to inform the military authorities and the public prosecutor in person. The sedan-chair, however, remained at the guard-house at the disposal of the law.

The unfortunate officer of the Croy company reposed in the house of his fathers upon a bed hung with black curtains, and at the foot of which a sister of the order of Saint Vincent de Paul watched and prayed.

Near this bed, magistrates and physicians, the highest legal functionaries, the most illustrious masters of science, had met early in the morning. In the large ante-room which opened into the vast reception hall where the bereaved father remained alone after a long conversation with an aide-de-camp of the King, sent by His Majesty to condole with him, and to notify the royal orders, the two oldest servants of the Brouage family were talking together in whispers.

Pierre Dugué, the steward, was waiting with Jean Taupin, the head groom, to receive their master's orders, and they were exchanging mournful comments upon the fatal event of the night before. They did not wear any livery, for they had the direction of the remaining servants, and both had an equal share of the marquis's confidence. Pierre Dugué was a Breton, an old soldier of Cadoudal and Charette, an ex-Chouan, whose pardon M. de Brouage had obtained under the Consulate. Jean Taupin had served fifteen years in the 9th Dragoons, and had twice saved his colonel's life. Dugué was devoted to the King; Taupin regretted the Emperor; hence it was that they could not agree.

They were indeed of one mind on one subject only. Either of them would have given his life for M. de Brouage: one was devoted to him as the head of an old royalist family, the other as a brave soldier of the great Napoleon. Dugué always addressed his master as "Marquis," Taupin always said "General." But both equally felt the great sorrow which had befallen upon their employer, and there were tears in their eyes.

"Poor Monsieur Henri!" muttered Dugué. "It was those rascally Bonapartists who murdered him."

"Hold your tongue!" growled Taupin. "He was not murdered; he was killed in a duel. All the doctors say so."

"A duel! at night! in the street, or in some cut-throat place—that comes to the same thing."

"That may be; but who did Monsieur Henri fight with? I don't know, nor you, either. His cousin alone might know it, as he was the last who saw him alive!"

"Are you going to begin your story again, and try to make me believe that Count René—"

"I don't say that; but plenty of others will think it."

"Plenty! yes, scamps like that detective in disguise whom the Prefect of Police brought here this morning, and who tried to make me tell him all I knew about Monsieur René!"

"He tried to pump me, too; but I received him in such a way that he won't care to begin again."

"That does not alter the fact that the count is already suspected. The general hasn't confined him in the pavilion in the garden for nothing."

"Confined him! you think that you are still in your regiment. Confinement orders were all very well for Bonaparte's army! The marquis merely requested the count not to leave this place. It is quite natural that he should wish to have his nephew near him when he has just lost his only son."

"All right! but the general has two nephews. Couldn't he send for the other one?"

"No; for he's a madcap, who is compromising himself by associating with the King's enemies, conspirators, and so on—and besides, he hasn't set foot here for more than a year, although he is dependent upon the marquis's bounty."

"If he doesn't come, it's because he is not made welcome when he does come. The general has a grudge against him because he refused to enlist in the Mousquetaires in 1814. I am sure, for my part, that Monsieur Fabien would gladly have become an officer in the days when fighting was going on. But he did not like parading about in the Cour du Carrousel at the Tuileries."

"Taupin," replied the steward, angrily, "if you go on talking in this way, I shall denounce you to the marquis."

"Denounce me, I don't care," replied Taupin, shrugging his shoulders. "The general has been made a peer under Louis XVIII., but for all that, he served under the Emperor, and if his son had been but one year older when the Cossacks entered France, he would have placed him in the guard of honour. Monsieur Henri would, perhaps, have been killed when he made his first charge, but that would have been better than dying from a swordthrust beside a mile-stone. I believe that it was one of his comrades that gave him that wound; they must have fought on account of some woman or other. Remember what I tell you! That detective in the green dress-coat will find out all about it one of these days. The fellow is somewhere about the house still, I suppose?"

"The marquis kept him here and wishes to talk with him at length, for he sent me to tell Mademoiselle Antoinette that he could not see her before this evening. Poor child! It is heart-breaking to look at her. She may die of this sorrow. She was so fond of her brother."

"Has the general told her what happened to her cousin?"

"No. She has sorrow enough as it is, and if she knew that Count René—he is the only true Brouage left now, as Monsieur Fabien has become a Jacobin—and if the marquis wants to keep his name from dying out, the only course will be to marry him to—"

A loud ring interrupted Pierre Dugné's discourse at this point. The steward knew that the summons was intended for him and hastened to obey it. He found his master in conversation with a well-dressed man, closely shaven and with trim hair. This was the man with the green coat whom Jean Taupin had called a police spy.

"Go and tell my nephew that I wish to see him," said the marquis to the old servant, who immediately started off in search of the young count.

M. de Brouage was very pale, and his features showed what efforts he was making to control his anguish. Still his eyes shone and he was not bowed down. Indeed, he held himself erect as formerly when under fire. He was dressed in black from head to foot, and what with his long frock coat buttoned up to his chin, there was more of the old soldier than of the peer about his appearance.

The person to whom he was talking was utterly unlike him.

He was a man of middle height, somewhat stout, with a mild flabby face which was quite devoid of expression. There may have been some about his eyes, but blue spectacles concealed them. He appeared to be about fifty, unless he were older; in point of fact, it was difficult to determine his precise age. He wore a double-breasted dress coat, black breeches, and gaiters coming up above the knee; that is to say, the usual attire of His Majesty Louis XVIII., with the difference only that the coat was green, instead of being blue, and that it was not adorned with epaulets.

M. de Brouage was taking long strides up and down the room. He perhaps remained standing in order to avoid asking his visitor to sit down. "I know," he said abruptly, "that I can trust you. The prefect and

the director-general of police both told me that you were skilful and honest."

The man bowed respectfully, and waited for the rest.

"You have been placed at my disposal," resumed the marquis; "I rely upon you serving me zealously, and discreetly. You know, your employers have already informed you in my presence, that the inquiry as to my son's death must be kept secret until the facts are fully known. Pending full enlightenment, the government desires that the matter should be as little talked of as possible."

"I can assure you, Monsieur le Marquis, that everything possible will be done to prevent a stir. It will be very difficult, not to say impossible, to prevent the national guards from talking, but the papers are already under orders to refrain from comment, and I have taken measures so that the public may believe the affair to be purely accidental. This is, moreover, the surest way of discovering the perpetrator or perpetrators of this dreadful crime."

"If you succeed, I shall not haggle about your reward. I do not wish that a moment should be lost. The starting-point of your investigations must be the evidence of my nephew, whom a strange fatality has involved in last night's events. He has already this morning told a magistrate all that he knows. But for reasons which I do not wish to speak of, I desire that he should repeat to you the story in my presence. I even wish you to lead him to state anything fresh, by questioning him as your sagacity may prompt you to do. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, Monsieur le Marquis, perfectly," replied the man with the green coat. "Casar's wife must not be suspected."

M. de Brouage started. The detective had guessed his very thoughts, and he considered that with so intelligent an auxiliary it would be best to explain himself fully. "This is what I wish," he replied firmly. "In the first place, and above all, to find out the truth. Then, to clearly define my nephew's situation. It may be that the magistrate who questioned him has conceived doubts founded upon certain circumstances."

"Count René de Brouage might indeed become heir to the peerage which you would have transmitted to your son, Monsieur le Marquis," said the police agent. "This would suffice to initiate malicious remarks, and to put the legal officials upon the alert."

"Quite so," replied the general, with emotion, which did not escape his companion's keen eyes. "And as it is impossible that a Brouage can have committed so infamous a crime, suspicion must at once be prevented. Your testimony would help to do this."

"I will endeavour to satisfy you, Monsieur le Marquis, and I think I shall be able to clear up everything. It is very necessary, besides; for I think there are several points upon which your nephew neglected to give any information to the magistrate. But I must ask you, marquis, how shall I proceed if—and it is indispensable that we should foresee everything—if anything of a compromising character should come to light during the conversation which I am about to have with Count René?"

"In that case," said the marquis, after a moment's silence. "I desire that no one may know what takes place here. No one, do you understand? The King knows my intentions and approves of them."

The detective bowed, without a word.

"The name I bear must not be disgraced," added M. de Brouage, with an effort. "Rather than suffer that shame should fall upon my

house, I would deal out justice with my own hand. I am authorised to do so."

The door of the reception-room opened, and the young count entered. He seemed more agitated and sorrowful than his uncle, and evidently had much less control over himself.

"Don't weep, René," said the marquis. "A man should never give way to tears. I don't, and yet heaven knows how much I suffer."

René drew himself up and drove back his tears. He was visibly endeavouring to master his crushing grief.

"I sent for you," resumed M. de Brouage, "in order that you might complete the explanation which you gave this morning. The King deigned to receive me at his levee. For political reasons, and through regard for our family, he wishes that it should not be known that one of his body-guard, the son of the Marquis de Brouage, allowed himself to be drawn into a trap, and was killed in a suspicious duel. Moreover, in order to avoid any scandal, His Majesty allows the Prefect of Police to confide the management of the matter to this gentleman, Monsieur—"

"Des Loquetières," said the man with the green coat, understanding that the marquis wished to know his name.

"I therefore beg you," resumed M. de Brouage, "to give Monsieur des Loquetières all the information that you can, so as to enable him to discover the culprits, for there is a hope that they may be found."

The young count's face showed that he was somewhat surprised, and he looked with marked coldness at the individual presented to him by his uncle; however, he replied, unhesitatingly, and without the least embarrassment. "I can only repeat what I have already told you, uncle, and the magistrate also. But I am ready to reply to any questions that may be asked."

"Excuse me, Monsieur le Comte," said Loquetières, "and allow me to beg of you to recall everything that you can. The most insignificant detail may furnish me with a clue. You saw Count Henri last night?"

"I went to meet my cousin at five o'clock at the barracks on the Quai d'Orsay. We dined with some of his comrades at the Rocher de Cancale restaurant, and then went to the Porte Saint-Martin Theatre. After the play, the other guardsmen left us, and Henri and I took a hackney-coach to the Place-Royale."

"This set you down at the door of a house where I spent the evening myself," interrupted the detective. "For I had the honour, count, of seeing you in Monsieur de Saint-Héliér's drawing-room."

"You visit Monsieur de Saint-Héliér!" exclaimed René, in amazement, for he could not understand how Octavie's father received a detective.

The marquis glanced at his nephew with a look that clearly signified: "Such are the people with whom you associate?" Loquetières did not flinch, although he fully understood the meaning of the young count's exclamation. "The Chevalier de Saint-Héliér is a worthy nobleman whom I became acquainted with at Coblenz," said he, taking a pinch of snuff from a gold snuff-box which he had the good taste to refrain from offering to General de Brouage. "I had occasion, afterwards, to render him some service in the exercise of my administrative functions, and he does me the honour to invite me now and then to his house."

This little speech meant: "I am officially a head-clerk or something of that sort, and only a detective on special occasions."

"This is unimportant," said the marquis, impatiently.

"I was saying, Monsieur le Comte," resumed Des Loquetières, "that I had the honour of seeing you last night in the chevalier's drawing-room. You came in, I think, while they were reading Monsieur d'Arlincourt's "Solitaire," that is to say, at about twelve o'clock?"

"Before twelve, I believe."

"And you went away while they were singing Plantade's and Caraffa's new song?"

"It must have been two o'clock when I went away."

"After a rather long conversation with Mademoiselle de Saint-Héliér' That is true."

"It seems that you were looking at me," said René, contemptuously.

"That is my way," replied Des Loquetières, smiling. "Besides the chevalier, while talking with me, pointed you out and mentioned your name, and quite naturally I looked at you. Neither your name nor your person would fail to be remarked, anywhere."

Satisfied, no doubt, with the manner in which he had paid this compliment, although it made the marquis frown, and René's manner become yet more freezing, the man with the green coat took a pinch of snuff, and continued: "You went away, then, at two in the morning, or thereabouts and walked towards your home?"

"Yes," replied the young count. "Henri had kept the cab which brought us. There were some hackney-coaches near the door; but the weather was dry and suited to walking. Besides, I had a headache, and I felt the need of fresh air."

"It was very warm in the chevalier's drawing-room. May I venture to ask where you live?"

"In the Rue d'Artois."

"You must have reached the Boulevard by the Rue du Pas de la Mule?"

"That was what I meant to do. But I walked across the Place-Royale in an absent way."

"Slantingly, no doubt?"

"Yes, so far as I can remember now. I took the first street that I saw."

"The Rue des Francs-Bourgeois, most likely."

"I don't know, but I do know that I lost my way."

"That is not surprising. I who am an old citizen of Paris would not answer for finding my way about that neighbourhood, late at night. After midnight, two thirds of the street-lamps are out. You went on then at haphazard? For how long?"

"For half an hour, perhaps, or it may have been an hour."

"In what direction?"

"I went, or I fancied that I went, towards the right, thinking that I should come nearer to the boulevard. But the streets intermingle and cross one another in such a manner, that I must have gone out of my way."

"It is very likely that you merely went round and round several blocks of houses, and covered the same ground several times over without noticing it."

"I think that it was so."

"And I conclude that you were not far from the Place-Royale, when you met the individual with the sedan-chair. But, while you were wandering about, didn't you remark any public building?"

"None at all, to my great surprise."

"So you did not pass in front of the Archives, or the Hôtel Soubise,

where the royal printing works are situated, or in front of the Temple either?"

"No, indeed."

"Do you remember the appearance of the street in which you met the man with the sedan-chair?"

"Not very well. But I think I should know it again. There was a long wall which must enclose some garden: at the corner of the wall there is a lane or a blind alley. He was standing, on the watch, at the entrance of this alley, which was very dark and narrow."

"Did he speak to you first?"

"No. On the contrary, he seemed disposed to go away when he saw that I was approaching him. It was I who called out to him to tell me my way. And he did not, at first, say anything to me about the sedan-chair. It was not until a somewhat lengthy explanation had taken place between us, and when he had found out that I had really lost my way, that he proposed that I should help him to carry his brother to the hospital."

"That is easy to account for. He wished to make sure that he was not addressing some one who, on the morrow, might point out the house where the murder was most probably committed. It did not occur to you to ask where you were?"

"Yes, it did. He replied that I was in the Rue de la Tixeranderie, and he told a falsehood, for it was in that street that I met the patrol, after having walked about for twenty minutes or more."

"Towards the Seine, eh?"

"Yes, as I was not far from the Hôtel de Ville when I was arrested; but we cannot have gone by the shortest road."

"Certainly not. The rascal had a plan of his own, which was to lead you along out-of-the-way streets to some deserted spot, where he meant to abandon you. He thought that unless you dropped stones along the road, like little Tom Thumb in the forest, you would never succeed in finding the streets through which you passed. The arrival of the national guards somewhat upset his plan, but he succeeded in getting off, and flatters himself that his crime will remain unpunished."

"Would you know him again if you saw him?" suddenly asked the Marquis de Brouage, who while listening had been walking nervously up and down.

"I did not see his face," replied René; "but I remember his figure and tone of voice. I hope that by starting from the Rue de la Tixeranderie, I shall succeed in retracing the route which I followed last night."

"I will make the attempt with you, Monsieur le Comte," said Des Loquetières, at once; "and the sooner the better."

"I prefer to make it alone," replied René, coldly.

The detective realised well enough that the young nobleman did not wish to be seen in the street in his company; but the marquis seemed surprised and shocked at this refusal.

"I will go over the ground to-day," resumed the count; "and I don't wish to prevent any one from following me. But I don't need any one to accompany me."

This time M. de Brouage understood and he did not insist, for he could not disapprove of René's proud scruples. However, he stopped short in front of the man with the green coat, and curtly said: "You have now heard all. What is your opinion?"

"My opinion is that the count is right. It is needless for him to take

part openly in the matter. It will suffice if he will try to find the place where the man stood when he accosted him, and even if he does not succeed in that, I will undertake to find the scoundrel. I don't say that I shall be able to arrest him at once ; but I am certain that he will betray himself sooner or later ! ”

“Why do you think so ? ”

“If you will do me the honour to listen to me, Monsieur le Marquis, I will explain my ideas as to this fatal affair, and I think that you will be of my opinion.”

“Speak, then.”

“You are aware, Monsieur le Marquis, that—I beg pardon for going into painful details—Count Henri was killed by a sword-thrust ? ”

“Which pierced his right eye,” said the general hoarsely. “It was a dashingly thrust, the kind of thing that Italian spadassins resort to.”

“A murderer's thrust ! ” retorted Des Loquetières warmly. “But it is no less certain that a duel took place. The fight was not a regular one, no doubt, still it had been agreed to by the count. His hat, coat, and sword, were lying at his feet in the sedan-chair ; the garments were not torn or even disarranged ; the sword was stained with blood upon the point however, so that the murderer must have been wounded ; finally, the count's purse and watch were still about his person.”

“Be brief,” muttered the unhappy father.

“The count, then, fell in a duel—a duel which he did not premeditate ; for he had not spoken of it to any one, and he allowed his companions to go off when certainly he would have asked them to be his seconds had he expected to fight. Besides, duels are not fought by night. The fight was unexpected, and took place perhaps in the street under a lantern, or, it may be, in some house or even garden. I am inclined to this last belief.”

“How can he have been decoyed into a house or garden ? ” asked René.

“The count may have quarrelled in the street. A man may have seen his guardsman's uniform and have insulted him. The count thereupon draws his sword. His adversary offers to give him satisfaction if he will enter some enclosure near by. The count is brave. He accepts. The scoundrel who insulted him kills him, and after killing him, devises the plan that you know of for getting rid of the body. Such is, I believe, the truth, and now I come to the conclusions which I deduce from all this. Wherever the duel may have taken place, whatever may have been the pretext, it can only have arisen from political hatred. The count fell from the thrust of one of those scoundrels who have sworn to overthrow both throne and altar, and who, while they conspire in the shade against the Bourbon government, try to slay, one by one, all the most valiant defenders of the King. Count Henri had been marked out as a victim because he belonged to His Majesty's body-guard, because he was heir to a peerage, and because the noble blood of the Marquis de Brouage flowed in his veins. How many more young noblemen have been murdered by these cut-throats ! In five months, four officers of the royal-guard have fallen in encounters, regular duels to all appearance, but in reality merely murders in disguise ; for they had to deal with professional duellists, and the game was not equal. You have not forgotten, Monsieur le Marquis, the conspiracy of the Black Pin which imperilled the monarchy four years ago ? It is renewed. We do not yet know where the conspirators meet, or what are their signals ; but we are upon their track, and know that their aim is the same as that of their predecessors. They are bent upon overthrowing the lawful King, to re-establish the usurper, and, while

waiting for the plot to ripen, they endeavour to kill the royalists, especially those who belong to the army."

"Yes," muttered M. de Brouage, "I know that the Carbonari, who have been dispersed in Italy, are trying to form again in France."

"Oh, those fellows are not to be feared," said Des Loquetières, with a self-satisfied smile; "we have an eye upon them, and they will not dare to show themselves in Paris. But they, unfortunately, have imitators. Count Henri's murder is the work of these hired assassins. They will not stop there. They will attack other officers who are devoted to the King. There are orders given so that a serious investigation may follow the first duel that takes place. If I affirmed just now that the murderer would betray himself, it is because I am sure that he will begin again; but I will act at once with the utmost energy. I have full liberty to do as I may please, and if I have to search every corner of Paris, I will discover the guilty man. One very important point must be cleared up. We must find out where the count went when he left the Place Royale. Unfortunately, we have not got the number of the hackney-coach which he took, but all the drivers will be questioned."

"I can give you an important indication on that point at once," said René. "On leaving me at Monsieur de Saint-Hélér's door, Henri declared that he was going to spend the remainder of the night at a gambling-house."

"You hid this from me?" exclaimed the general.

"I did not like to tell you, and I shrank from saying so to the magistrate."

"And do you know, count, where this gambling-house is situated?" eagerly asked Des Loquetières.

"It is kept by an Italian woman, who calls herself the Baroness de Casanova."

"Good! we know her den. Madame de Casanova came here last year, and calls herself a baroness, and says that she is the widow of a colonel; but she is really an adventuress, and her niece is no better than she is. She has a very pretty niece, by the way, quite young, and the two together make dupes of people. I have long had an eye upon them both, and have no reason to spare them. They shall be questioned to-day, and arrested if there be any reason for it. Only they live in the Rue de Baby-lone, which is very far from the Place Royale—far, too, from the place where the count was killed. No matter! the quarrel may have begun at the baroness's house, and have been settled in the Marais: I will find out the truth, and so as not to lose a moment, I will with your permission take leave of you, Monsieur le Marquis, without further delay."

Without replying to the profound bow which the agent made to him, M. de Brouage made him a sign to follow him into the embrasure of a window, and when there, asked him in a low whisper: "My nephew is innocent, is he not?"

"Entirely so, marquis," replied Des Loquetières in the same tone.

"I will not detain you any longer then," said the general, aloud, "but I shall rely upon your zeal."

The detective bowed to the very ground, and went out without turning his back upon the general. As soon as the door of the reception-room had closed upon him, René walked up to his uncle, and said: "I do not know whether that police spy will find the murderer or not, but I swear to you that I will find him, and that I will avenge Henri."

III.

ON the evening of that same day, while the general was weeping for his son, and René was vowing to avenge his unfortunate cousin's death, the Baroness de Casanova was entertaining a numerous and gay party at the house where she resided, at the corner of the Rue de Monsieur and the Rue de Babylone. The baroness, who declared herself to be the widow of a Neapolitan colonel, had arrived in Paris, at the beginning of the year 1820, and had soon picked up plenty of acquaintances. She first appeared at the public gardens, which fashionable young men then frequented, such as Tivoli, Beaujon, Ranelagh, and others, and as she was always accompanied by a young woman of dazzling beauty, she soon found herself surrounded by a brilliant crowd. The attentions of the gentlemen were especially directed to her charming niece, Signora Stella Negroni, who never left her aunt, and who also gave herself out as a widow, although barely more than five-and-twenty.

It was soon known that the two foreigners were fond of pleasure, that they preferred masculine society, and that their reception-rooms were open to whosoever had a certain position, and good manners. Both women had the appearance of belonging to good society, and they had, apparently, abundant means, for they paid a high rent for a handsome house, between court and garden, and led a life that involved considerable expenditure, although they kept no carriage. Whence did they derive their income? Slanderers said that it was from their card-tables where *bouillotte* and *creps* were played; and it was even asserted that Signora Negroni treated wealthy admirers fairly well. However, as the names of these wealthy admirers were never given, and as, on the other hand, the Baroness de Casanova did not levy any tax on the winnings made at her card-tables, many persons declared these rumours to be quite unfounded.

What is certain is, that every night the house where these Italian women lived, was filled with amiable gentlemen, who met there upon neutral ground. The officers of the new army elbowed the soldiers of the old guard. Stock-brokers and state-councillors also met there, together with various deputies. Royalists were less numerous among the visitors than liberals, but they were equally well received; in fact the ladies, the baroness especially, were extremely cordial in their attentions to those guests who upheld the monarchy.

They did not, however, seek the society of their fellow-countrymen. No Italian visited them. Politics were never discussed, and the conversation seldom became general.

Each visitor availed himself of the freedom which Madame de Casanova allowed her guests to enjoy, and they all did as they pleased, some playing cards, others courting Stella or assembling together to chat. Some even went to walk about the gardens when the weather permitted. No one paid any attention to them, and the Signora Negroni was always surrounded. The baroness on her side seldom left the card-tables, being passionately fond of play and very lucky.

The usual visitors arrived at a somewhat late hour; some even came on leaving the theatre, so that at midnight the gathering was very animated.

Midnight was the hour chosen by Des Loquetières for his visit, for after reflection he had decided to modify the plan which he had exposed to the

marquis. He said to himself, that to find out the truth, it would not suffice to go abruptly to the house in the Rue de Babylone and question the people who lived there. The women would not fail to deny everything, and it would be very difficult to prove that they spoke falsely, for it was almost certain that Count Henri had not been killed at their house. Besides, by having recourse to violent means, the affair would become known instead of remaining secret. It was better therefore to resort to gentleness and skill. Des Loquetières was a master in operations requiring tact, patience, cunning, and knowledge of the human heart. He had shown his ability under Fouché, who had often employed him in difficult matters, and, like Fouché, he had successively served the Directory, the Empire, and the Bourbons, with the same unflagging zeal. He thus held a high position in the secret political police, and possessed considerable private means. He did not associate with the subaltern spies, and had made respectable acquaintances, amongst whom was the Chevalier de Saint-Hélicr. However, he had not given up his profession, and he felt proud at being chosen to direct an inquiry interesting a peer of France.

As to the case in question, he had no doubts. He believed that Count René was innocent, and that his cousin had been killed by a political enemy. He thought, moreover, that it was best to base the investigation on René's statements, and to find out what had happened at Madame de Casanova's house, as well as to search for the residence of the man with the sedan-chair. The count having declared that he would search for this abode alone, Des Loquetières contented himself with instructing a subordinate spy to follow him. René de Brouage walked through the neighbourhood of the Hôtel de Ville that same day, but without recognizing the spot where he had helped to carry the chair, and without knowing that he was followed by a spy.

As for the women in the Rue de Babylone, they had been quietly watched ever since their arrival in France, and nothing had been found out about them. It was known that their passports were in order, and that they had deposited a large amount of money with a Paris banker. This amount not having been touched by them—this also was known—it was supposed that their resources came from their admirers, and the men who played cards at their house; however, those who lost at play and those who courted them had never been known to complain, so there had been no pretext for interference; and the baroness and her niece had been left in peace.

No one accused them of meddling with politics, unless indeed it might be Des Loquetières, who had several times called the attention of his superiors to these two foreigners. However, he had quite forgotten them, when suddenly the young count's story again aroused his suspicions; he then resolved to examine their way of life and to find out their secrets, but he took care not to apply to his inferiors for assistance. In the first place, he had but little confidence in the skill of his colleagues, who did not possess the tact required in so delicate a matter, and, moreover, he preferred to keep the honour of managing the affair to himself. All that he did was to have a few inquiries made. That afternoon a couple of subaltern agents strolled about the neighbourhood of the Rue de Babylone, talking with the shopkeepers and drinking in the taverns where they found persons to answer their questions. However, they could not find out anything of the least importance as concerned the Italian women, merely learning that there had been no quarrel at the baroness's reception on Shrove-Sunday.

Their report confirmed Des Loquetières' opinion, but he nevertheless held to the plan of spending the evening at the baroness's house. He had never set foot there, and the women did not know him; still he did not hesitate about going there, knowing that they did not insist upon the formality of an introduction, and having found an excuse which would serve his purpose. He even thought it idle to assume a different name, as that which he bore was in good repute. In fact, he went everywhere and had never been suspected of belonging to the police of the realm.

On alighting from a hackney coach which he had hired, he found in the hall a servant who neither had the air, nor wore the costume, of an ordinary doorkeeper. This fellow was a well-built, strapping young man, whose dark complexion and eyes denoted his origin. He might have sat for a model of a Calabrian brigand to Horace Vernet, and he had certainly been born in the mountainous regions of southern Italy. He looked at Des Loquetières from head to foot, and although he seemed civil enough, he stood in such a manner as to intercept the way to the staircase, and evidently waited to learn the name of this visitor, whom he now saw for the first time.

"My lad," said the detective, "I am to be introduced to the baroness this evening by my friend, Count Henri de Brouage. You know him, of course, as he often comes here. Can you tell me if he has arrived yet?"

While thus abruptly delivering himself of this carefully prepared speech, Des Loquetières looked at the doorkeeper with eyes which knew how to penetrate the most secret thoughts and the most transient feelings. The doorkeeper did not flinch, however, but quietly replied: "I have not yet seen Count Henri; but he will be here, of course."

"He was here last night, was he not?"

"Last night? No. I think not. Let me see—Ah! yes, I was at the end of the hall. The door was open, and I saw him come up in a hackney-coach and he got out, but didn't come in."

"Indeed! Why was that?"

"I don't know. I suppose that he must have seen some friend outside. I think he stopped to talk with some one. I was called away, however, and when I went to the door the count wasn't there. His friend must have taken him off."

All this was said with a very decided Italian accent, but in tolerably correct French, and with the most innocent air imaginable. Des Loquetières was astounded. To find in the replies of the first person he questioned a solution of the problem which he was endeavouring to solve, this was something which he had not expected, and his success was beyond his hopes. Everything was explained in a very plausible way, if things had happened as the doorkeeper stated. The count, on alighting from his cab, had probably been accosted by some one whom he knew, since he had gone away with him. It remained to be ascertained, however, whether the doorkeeper was not repeating a story which he had learned by heart. "No," thought Des Loquetières, who knew all about such things; "he is telling the truth. If he were lying he would be the greatest actor living."

"Besides," continued the Italian, "if you will walk upstairs, sir, you may find some one who will be able to give you full information about Count Henri."

"Who may that be?"

"Count Henri's cousin."

"What cousin?" exclaimed Des Loquetières.

He was thinking of René, and was greatly surprised to learn that the count was at the baroness's house.

"Viscount Fabien."

"Ah! I understand," thought the agent. "It is Count René's younger brother. We have rather bad information as regards him. How does it happen that he is spending his time at a gambling-house on the eve of his cousin's funeral?"

"The viscount was here yesterday," resumed the doorkeeper, "He comes every night. So he can answer your questions better than I can."

"And he will introduce me to the Baroness de Casanova. That will avert the disagreeable necessity of waiting in the hall for Count Henri to arrive," replied Des Loquetières.

He had made up his mind to proceed with the investigation, and not to leave the house until he had cleared up the many serious doubts which assailed him. He went up the stairs slowly, so as to give himself time for thought, and as he did so he said to himself: "People walk in here as they would into any public place. If these women were conspiring, they would be more careful. But I must closely examine the conduct of this Viscount Fabien. I don't know him by sight, unfortunately, and I shall be obliged to ask some one here to point him out to me."

He had just reached the landing when he caught sight of a young man leaning against the banister and reading a letter by the light of a lamp. "Hullo!" he muttered, "it's Marcas, my friend Saint-Héliér's secretary. I'm not sorry to meet him here! But what can he be doing at the baroness's house?"

The young man whom Des Loquetières espied, was so absorbed in his reading that he did not perceive the visitor coming up the stairs. The spy crept up close behind him and suddenly exclaimed, catching hold of his arm: "Aha! I've caught you, Monsieur Victorin! *Tu quoque, fili!* You also, my lad, spend your nights at Madame de Casanova's?"

Victorin started, crumpled up the letter which he had been reading so attentively, and put it in his pocket. At the same moment he turned round.

"What, is it you?" exclaimed he, recognizing Des Loquetières.

"Yes, indeed! The entertainment provided here is perhaps not in accordance with my age, but one must see all that is to be seen, and I have heard so much about the beauty of Signora Negroni— But what ails you, my young friend? You are as pale as death."

"Nothing," stammered the young fellow. "I have a rheumatic pain in my right shoulder, and you hurt me dreadfully when you touched me just now."

"Dear me! I had no idea that you were so sensitive. That is the way with young fellows, now-a-days! At twenty-three, they have the rheumatism. Fortunately yours does not prevent you from amusing yourself. I'll venture to say that you won't leave this house till daybreak. If my friend Saint-Héliér requires his secretary in the morning, well, so much the worse."

"Oh! he never shows himself before noon."

"True; and, besides, you have a right to amuse yourself. Your father sent you to Paris to study law, but he did not forbid your going into society, and you prefer the baroness's drawing-room to the receptions at the Place Royale."

"I confess that I have no taste for music, or dancing, or Arlincourt's

prose : and I kept away last night, as I usually do, from Monsieur de Saint-Héliér's entertainments."

"You lost by doing so, for Mademoiselle Octavie has a pair of eyes that would make a man endure hearing the perusal of ten novels and half-a-dozen tragedies."

"You saw her, then?" said the young secretary, eagerly.

"Saw and admired her, my dear fellow, and I can assure you that she never looked handsomer. I thought her—well, resplendent is the word. But never mind about all that; I don't care to catch cold on these stairs, and your rheumatism won't be cured here either. You must introduce me to the ladies. I haven't the good fortune to know them; and when I came I relied upon the chance of meeting some friend to introduce me. I didn't expect to be so fortunate as to find you, but you must know the baroness very well. I am sure that you do not miss an evening."

"You are mistaken. I was not here last night, and if you see me here now, it's only because—"

"Oh! I don't reproach you, on the contrary, and I promise to say nothing about it to Saint-Héliér. Let us go in, my young friend, and pray open the gates of this Olympus for me. I am dying to offer my respects to the goddesses who embellish it."

M. des Loquetières had been a beau in the days of the Directory, and was partial to the mythological style of his youth.

Victorin Marcas made no objections, and he preceded the important personage whom he had so often met at Saint-Héliér's house. This was not because he was partial to him, for to tell the truth the young secretary did not entertain any liking either for his employer or his employer's friends. His father, a petty landholder in Languedoc, had sent him to Paris to study law, recommending him to a deputy, who was favourable to the existing government, and the latter had placed him with M. de Saint-Héliér. It is needless to say that the young student went far oftener to taverns, public balls, and fencing galleries, than to the School of Law. He only attended the lectures when the students meant to hiss some professor, and he was indeed partial to political gatherings, invariably showing up whenever Manuel and General Foy were to be applauded after a scene at the Chamber, or when he could hoot the ultra deputies who met in the Rue Thérèse, at the house of their respectable colleague, Piet.

In point of fact, Victorin, although the son of a royalist of southern France, had very "advanced" opinions, and was acquainted with the bitterest enemies of the Bourbons. Still he remained on good terms with the chevalier, who was very devoted to the monarchy, and who certainly did not dream that his secretary was an incipient revolutionist. Perhaps Octavie's lovely eyes retained Marcas at the Place Royale. He saw her every day, for he called regularly at noon at Saint-Héliér's house, and as the chevalier often went to sleep after lunch, it frequently happened that when the charming Octavie went into her father's study, she only found the young secretary there, and deigned to chat with him. These interviews could not lead to anything serious, however, for Marcas was not in a position to aspire to the hand of a wealthy heiress; still they did not appear to be unpleasant even to Octavie herself.

Marcas, although he was not what could be called a handsome man, had an intelligent face and a manner that made him pleasing to women. He had a way of looking at them which was as much as to say: "Put me to the proof. Is it necessary to snatch a star from heaven or to risk my life to

rid you of a jealous husband or a troublesome lover? I am at your disposal." Octavie had certainly nothing of that sort to ask for, but she admired his sharp and lively wit, his easy sallies and cutting sarcasms. He spoke with great facility, and his remarks were full of depth, reflection, and astuteness. Balzac says that when a southerner has the craft of the northerner, and the daring of the men from beyond the Loire, he is complete, and "remains King of Sweden." Of course Marcas had no thought of being a king like Bernadotte, but he was nevertheless "complete."

"Young man," said Des Loquetières to him as they entered the ante-room, "I rely upon you not only to introduce me, but to pilot me through these regions, which are quite unknown to me. I have been told that the ladies receive celebrated men here; point them out to me. You must be well acquainted with them all."

"I? not at all. I have only been visiting here recently, and I scarcely know anyone," hastily replied the student, who seemed but little disposed to serve as a guide to the chevalier's friend. "Between ourselves, I only come here to play, and I don't trouble myself about the friends of the baroness. I am at your disposal all the same, however, and I will do my best to inform you about them," he added, politely, while a well-dressed lackey took off their cloaks.

At Madame de Casanova's house no one was announced, for fear of disturbing the card-players. Marcas and Des Loquetières were therefore able to slip into the drawing-room without being noticed. The apartment was very large, richly decorated, and brilliantly lighted up. The windows overlooked a garden belonging to the house, and communicated with a boudoir, the door of which had been removed so as to allow a full view of the card-tables to the persons who retired to chat in this cosy nook. As regards the gambling, the table at which most players were assembled was that where *creps*, a game of dice-throwing, was being played. The others set aside for *écarté* and *bouillotte* also attracted amateurs. As for the guests who preferred conversation to the emotions of the gaming-table, they were grouped about the fire-place or seated upon the sofas at the two ends of the room. The games, although lively, were not noisy, and the talking was carried on in a low tone. One might, in a word, have thought oneself in really refined company.

"My dear lad," said Des Loquetières in a low tone, "those who say that the baroness keeps a gambling hell are quite mistaken. This company reminds me of the entertainments given by Madame de Sainte-Amaranthe, at the beginning of the Revolution. People played there with propriety, as they do here. Politicians went there, and I see that two deputies of the opposition are here. There were military men with all sorts of opinions, and here are officers of the royal guard, and others on half pay."

"Fortunately," said Marcas, laughing, "the resemblance ceases there. Madame de Sainte-Amaranthe and her daughter were guillotined if I am not mistaken? I hope that the baroness and her niece will not come to so tragical an end."

"The deuce! that would be too bad. But these ladies have nothing of the kind to fear, for, thank Heaven, we are no longer under the Reign of Terror, and the horrors of the Revolution will never be renewed. You should congratulate yourself, my lad, upon not living under so abominable a government."

The student did not reply, but his face indicated that he would have rather liked to live in such stirring times as "Ninety-Three."

"Will you point out the baroness to me, before you introduce me to her?" said Des Loquetières.

"She is at the other end of the room, and no doubt fully occupied in playing *bouillotte*."

"And her charming niece? Where is she?"

"Signora Negroni usually stays in the boudoir. But, if you take my advice, you won't select me to introduce you. These ladies look upon me as a poor devil of a student, whose presence here is quite without importance, and they would no doubt be greatly surprised if I presumed to introduce a man older than I am, and with a much better social position than mine."

"Oh, I won't trouble you, my dear Victorin; besides, I am not especially desirous of paying my respects to the ladies. I should do so with pleasure if it were necessary, but I am fully as well pleased not to be introduced at all. Between ourselves," added the spy, assuming a confidential air, "I took it into my head to come here merely to see the person whose beauty has made such a stir in Paris, and also to try my luck. For I don't dislike either pretty women or cards. And, to complete my confessions, I will tell you that I adore brunettes, and am particularly fond of *écarté*."

"You could not have chosen better, then. Stella Negroni is as dark as night, and there is a game of *écarté* going on over there at which hundreds of louis are being lost and won. However, I prefer dice-throwing for my part, and I am going to try to squeeze myself into a corner at the large table. So allow me to leave you, now that you know all that you wish."

"As you please, my dear Victorin. Amuse yourself as young men should, and rely upon my discretion. Saint-Hélér shall never know that I met you here, nor shall I even tell him that I came here myself."

The student replied by a smile, which signified: "I shall say nothing of our meeting," and he went towards the table at which the dice-throwing was going on. Des Loquetières was not sorry that the chevalier's secretary left him. He no longer needed him, as it was possible to frequent the rooms without being introduced to the baroness or her niece, and he preferred to direct his own movements. He wished above all to see and observe Fabien de Brouage who had come to amuse himself here on the day after his cousin's tragic death; and he no longer cared to ask Marcas any questions, for fear of giving him a hint as to the true motive of his presence, and exciting his wonder as to why he, Des Loquetières, a middle-aged, serious man, had come to such a place. Hoping to succeed in his aim, and relying upon his own sagacity to discover the young viscount, he set out upon a voyage of discovery through Madame de Casanova's drawing-room. He began by the central table.

It was not easy to approach it, for there were players standing up making bets, and surrounding those who were seated. Loquetières succeeded, however, in getting into this circle, and found himself between two officers of the Horse Grenadiers who had come in undress uniform.

"The army is well represented here," thought he. "If there be any conspirators, they are not in a majority."

He then glanced with a well-practiced eye on all those about him. Victorin Marcas had not succeeded in getting into the group, for he was not to be seen. But there were plenty of persons to look at, and the detective presently said to himself: "Aha! I made up my mind a little too soon it seems. There are some gentlemen who seem to me to have served Bona-
parte and to regret him. They wear the ribbon of the Legion of Honour

in their button-holes and have military whiskers—that's the style. And there are several liberals, too; yes, a well-known liberal deputy holds the bank. It's he, and no mistake, the orator of the opposition, with his long hair and haughty look—Mirabeau at Sainte-Amaranthe's, as it were. And over there, leaning against the mantel-piece, stands the great chief of the party—he doesn't play cards, and isn't a Mirabeau by any means, but he is a marquis, and for him to come here he must have good reasons. Who is the man with whom he is talking so familiarly? I must find out, and I am beginning to think that I shall not altogether lose my time to-night."

These thoughts were interrupted by the exclamations of the players at a stroke of unusual good luck. "Seven times!" exclaimed an officer who stood beside Des Loquetières. "Seven times that lucky Brouage has made a good throw!"

"By-the-bye," said another in a low tone, "is it true that his cousin, the general's son, was killed in a duel last night? There was a rumour to that effect this evening at headquarters."

"It is true, unhappily. La Martinière who belongs to 'Monsieur's' guards assured me that it was a fact, and that he had it from good authority. But they are trying to keep the matter quiet, and the papers have orders to say nothing about it."

"Is it known who killed him? Is the cause of the duel known?"

"Nothing whatever is known. It is thought that it must have been a quarrel in the street. He was in full uniform. He must have drawn his sword."

"He fought with a soldier, then? Citizens don't wear swords."

"He may have been entrapped in some way. Some people who come here had a grudge against him."

"Well, at all events, the quarrel did not begin in the baroness's rooms, for Henri de Brouage did not set foot here yesterday. We were here and we should have seen him."

"No, he didn't come here, though his cousin was here as usual. It is astounding that he should shew himself here on the very day after such an occurrence."

"He may not know anything about it. He isn't on good terms with his uncle."

"Bah! his brother visits the general, and he goes to see his brother."

"Very seldom, I believe. He has revolutionary ideas and is madly in love with Stella Negroni. He spends his time either here or in the cafés where the liberals meet. He is a man to be avoided, and I presume that his family have cast him off altogether."

"Upon my word, I forgive him his opinions as he is so lucky at *creps*. He has made me win thirty louis to-night."

"And I have won twenty myself. But no matter, the baroness's house doesn't usually bring luck to us royalists. In five months four officers of the guard who visited here have been killed in duels."

"Bah! the run of bad luck will change now, and meantime, I will profit by that which favours that Jacobin viscount. Let us make up ten louis between us, eh?"

It may readily be believed that Des Loquetières had not lost a word of this chatter which had gone on in spite of the noise made by the settling of the previous game. The detective alone had listened to what was being said. Chance was favouring him. He was already enlightened on one or two important points. Henri de Brouage had not appeared at the

baroness's on the night before. Fabien de Brouage, on the contrary, had stayed there till morning. Fabien, therefore, had had nothing whatever to do with the quarrel which had ended in the death of his cousin, and very probably he was ignorant of the affair, for otherwise he would not have outraged propriety in such a style as to gamble at Madame de Casanova's house.

"That is indisputable proof that he does not often see his brother, whatever this officer may say," thought the logical Des Loquetières. "On the other hand, he is going the wrong tack in politics, and there are chances that he may be the lover of Madame de Casanova's niece. I must therefore keep my eye upon the niece and the aunt also. I must take note, also, of the fact that four royalist officers who visit these ladies have been brought down—in open daylight, it is true, but what of that? There are, perhaps, some men here who have taken over the business of the 'Black Pin Association.' In 1817, the fighters of the party associated together in view of picking quarrels with the officers of the allied army. Now that the territory has been evacuated, they probably intend to kill off the officers of the royal guard. This must be looked into, and as soon as possible. I must not forget, however, that there is a woman in the case. Who knows whether the outsiders may not have a grudge against her lovers? Count Henri must have been attentive to her, at least, I shall see her presently, and find out what men are here. Meantime, I must take a look at this Monsieur Fabien."

The viscount was seated right in front of the detective, his face was in a full blaze of light, and it was well worth looking at. He was very much like his brother in features, but not in expression. He was fair like René, and had blue eyes, and an aquiline nose, but while René was cold and reserved, Fabien was ardent and eager. Every passion was legible on his expressive face, and it was enough to look at him to guess that he would love ardently. There was a fire in his eyes, and a glow upon his cheeks.

At this moment it was not love that animated his face, however. He was eagerly rattling the dice-box, throwing down the dice violently, and clutching hold of the gold which the banker pushed toward him. The *creps* played at the baroness's house ran almost as high as that at the Cercle des Etrangers. This game is now out of fashion, but it was much played at that time, and it seemed to be exactly suited to the viscount, who attacked luck like a soldier executes a bayonet charge. His impetuous character did not accord with silent card-playing. He needed the sharp rattle of the ivory, as it struck the sides of the box, and the rolling of the tiny white dice upon the green cloth. *Creps*, to him, was a noisy, changeful, and stirring contest.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," said Des Loquetières to his neighbours, the grenadiers; "but will you be kind enough to explain the rules of this game to me? I don't know what they are, and I should like to stake a few louis."

"It is a very simple affair," replied one of the officers. "You play, you see, against a bank, and each player takes the box in turn. Before throwing, however, he calls out a number. 'He may call out, five, six, seven, eight, or nine. If the number that he calls out comes at his first throw, he wins. There now, Monsieur de Brouage, who is playing, is calling out seven. You will see for yourself.'"

"Ah!" said Des Loquetières, "he has thrown eleven."

"That wins. We have won ten louis, my friend and I."

"And the gentleman whom you just spoke of wins a thousand francs. This is a fine game and seems to me to give the players a good chance."

"Don't deceive yourself. It is, on the contrary, a very advantageous game to the man holding the bank, as there is but one winning number, while there are three others—twelve, three, and two—that are losing numbers; however, Brouage is so lucky that he never throws them."

"Shall we bet again?" asked the other grenadier.

"Well, yes, I feel pretty confident."

"So do I," said Des Loquetières, placing three gold coins upon the table; "I will risk a little money. That is the best way to learn. Let me see—that gentleman calls seven again."

"He does right, seven is the easiest of all throws with two dice."

"He will throw it, I hope," said the friend of the Chevalier de Saint-Hélér, "at least he seems to be sure of victory. He brandishes his dice-box as though it were a sword. The banker looks ill at ease. Ah! there are the dice rolling, and he is looking at them. What is the result?"

"Four," said the officer.

"Is that a losing number?"

"No; but it is a bad number, and it is ours now, as the seven that Brouage called out becomes the banker's number."

"What will happen now!"

"Brouage will throw till four or seven turns up. The first that comes will win."

"Ah! I am beginning to understand. How pale the banker looks!"

"Because he has seen the throw. Brouage has just thrown four again."

"We have won, then?"

"Of course, as they are about to give us our winnings. I fancy that the bank will soon be broken, and I advise you to try your run of luck."

"Well—I hardly dare," replied Des Loquetières, who was already pocketing his winnings. "I know so little about this game, so I shall content myself with the lesson that you have kindly given me."

The officer looked at the timid individual who had slipped into the baroness's rooms to win a few paltry louis and stop at that, but the detective had not come for the purpose of winning the good opinion of two lieutenants of the Horse Grenadiers, or of trying his luck at play. He had merely acted this little farce to be able to observe Fabien at his leisure, without exciting surprise at his eagerness to get near the table.

He had now seen all that he wished to see, and had about made up his mind as regards Count René's brother.

"He is a fellow whose vices have led him to associate with questionable people, and though he may possibly be conspiring," thought Des Loquetières, "men who gamble are never dangerous to government. Their passion for cards entirely absorbs them. I shall never believe that this devotee to the dice-table murdered his cousin. With a head like his, a man may blow out his own brains when he has come to ruin, but he won't murder other people. And besides, what interest could he have had in the death of Count Henri? With the opinions he proclaims, he cannot expect to succeed to his uncle's peerage. Besides, if the count was condemned to die by some bandits who have sworn to exterminate the defenders of the throne and altar, they would never have chosen a Brouage to give him a sword-thrust. And then the testimony which I have gathered, clears him completely from any suspicion. He evidently spent the evening and night here; those officers had no motive for lying, and they have just said that they saw him here. I

must look further, and shall, perhaps, not need to look far; for, after all, at the door of this house Count Henri met a man with whom he went away; if he followed him he must have known him, and it may be that he made his acquaintance here. I must now study the baroness for a while, and I shall surely find her, although Marcas is not here to point her out to me. By the way, where has Marcas gone?" now thought Loquetières, who remarked everything that occurred. "He left me abruptly under pretence of going to play at dice, and yet I don't see him near the table. Saint-Héliér does wrong to employ that fellow. He is quite capable of doing something crazy or other. As soon as I have a right to speak, I shall tell the chevalier to send him away, if only to prevent him from making eyes at—"

"Good evening, my dear Monsieur des Loquetières," said a deep voice at this moment, and a hand was laid upon the shoulder of the detective, who hastily turned round and found himself face to face with an acquaintance.

"What! is it you, Bernaville? What the deuce are you doing here?"

"What are you doing here yourself?" asked the new-comer in a mocking tone. He was a man of about forty with a pleasant and intelligent countenance.

"My dear sir, curiosity brought me here: I had been told that astonishing things happened here, and to tell you the truth, what astonishes me the most is to find that I am here myself."

"Well, I confess that I enjoy myself when I come here, and I come very often."

"It is quite natural that you should. Being a journalist, you must go everywhere."

"Excuse me, I am a journalist, as you say. But I edit the *White Flag*, and it is somewhat risky for me to venture among the liberals and Bonapartists who flock to this place."

"Are there many of them? I have only so far noticed officers of the royal guard."

"Loquetières, my friend, you want to make yourself out to be a simple-minded man; you cannot make me believe that. I don't know whether you have ever had anything to do with diplomacy, but you say that you have, and I take your word for it, as I do Saint-Héliér's when he tells me that he was agent for the princes during the emigration. However, do not attempt to make me believe that you have not noticed certain persons here who would gladly have both you and me shot if they only got the upper hand."

"Well, I did see the deputy holding the bank at *creps*."

"Oh! he frequently comes here and only for the sake of play. But the other one, the Grand Lama of democracy, isn't, I believe, attracted here by card-playing."

"Where is he?" asked Des Loquetières with an innocent expression.

"Over there by the mantelpiece," replied Bernaville. "What! can't you see him? He is talking to a very dark man with a coral pin in his lace tie."

"True, I see him now," said Des Loquetières. "He hasn't changed much since the Revolution."

"Oh, he is a well preserved man—almost as well preserved as an Egyptian mummy," said Bernaville, laughing. "He is an unchangeable man. Such as you saw him in 1790, such he is now, and such he will be twenty years

hence—unless his friends come into power, for he will surely die on the day when he cannot lead some opposition or other.”

“Then I wish him long life, my dear sir. But tell me, who is the person talking to him?”

“The man with the pin? He is not of the same way of thinking in politics. He is a great Spanish grandee whom the Revolution has driven from his own country. He will not return there till we have delivered Ferdinand VII., which will soon happen, let us hope, and meantime he spends his evenings occasionally at the baroness’s in order to study the customs of the Parisians. He is said to be very rich, and if he associates with the head of the Opposition, it is only because the head of the Opposition is a marquis.”

“He has a face, which, once seen, is not likely to be forgotten,” said Des Loquetières.

And indeed, the person conversing with the Marquis de la Fayette, the head of the French opposition party, the foreigner who was persecuted by the Spanish liberals, according to Bernaville’s account, was entirely unlike the other guests of Madame de Casanova. He was a man of thirty or thirty-five, very tall, well-built, with a manner and bearing that plainly indicated high birth. His face was wanting in regularity, and his shoulders were high, perhaps; but his brow denoted lofty intellect, and his eyes were full of fire. The most noticeable feature of his face was a Bourbon nose well suited to his haughty and somewhat ironical expression of countenance. He was plainly but elegantly attired in the fashion of the day. He wore neither lace nor jewels, and the only detail of his attire which indicated his southern origin was the pin which had for a moment attracted Des Loquetières’ attention—a pin with a head of pink coral, such as is found on the coast of Africa.

Coral had been greatly worn in Paris under the Consulate, and had again been patronised at the beginning of the Restoration, but in 1821 it was no longer cared for in France, although still fashionable in Naples. Now Naples being half Spanish at that time, a Castilian might very naturally wear what was worn there. Des Loquetières, who noticed everything, and pins especially, since the plot of 1817, now thought of this. The ornament had at first made him thoughtful, but now he only noticed the man and wished to know his name. “What is this *hidalgo* called?” said he to Bernaville.

“I suppose,” replied the editor, “that his name is Gomez, unless indeed it be Tellez or Valdez; but I must confess that I don’t know. He must, like all his fellow-countrymen, have half a dozen names in *es* or *os*, each separated by a *y*.”

“Well, I must say, that your refugee looks like a genuine Spanish nobleman.”

“Not at all. Spanish grandees are, almost all of them, ill-built and short, and this faithful follower of the baroness is a fine looking man.”

“Faithful follower? Does he come here often?”

“I never come here without meeting him. It is true that I only come from time to time. Are you surprised that he frequents these rooms where people of all sorts assemble? He comes because he is vicious, and vices, you know, bring people together.”

“This grandee is a gambler, then?”

“Most likely, unless he is sweet on Signora Negroni. He is very discreet about it, if he is; but I have more than once seen him alone with her

when he no doubt thought that nobody was watching. His doubloons, perhaps, account for the splendour we see here."

"Can you tell me whether he spent last night here?" asked the detective.

"How in the world should I know? Do you suppose that I come here every night myself? What have you taken into your head now? You are as inquisitive as the bailiff in Voltaire's play of the 'Ingénu.'"

"What! you quote Voltaire, you the editor of the *White Flag*?"

"Why not? He hated low people, and if the Revolutionists who praise him to the skies had undertaken to preach his doctrines upon his own estates, he would have had them thrown into a dungeon. But let us allow the defunct Arouet to sleep in peace, and I will show you the baroness and her niece, if you like."

"I should be glad to see them," said Des Loquetières, more and more pleased at having met so well-informed and obliging a guide.

Bernaville went with him through the groups of guests, and by picking their way they finally came to the end of the room, where tables for *bouillotte* and *écarté* stood parallel to one another. At Madame de Casanova's house every game had its partisans. Some played at dice-throwing; *écarté* was preferred by the officers of the new and the old army, and *bouillotte* by the elderly men who had shone under the Directory. The baroness was very fond of playing this game of *bouillotte*, although she herself was not yet forty. Des Loquetières now looked at her attentively, and saw that she was still a very fine woman.

Her waist was not slender, but she had superb shoulders, which she freely displayed, and plump arms. Her hands, however, were not particularly choice, for the fingers were too short, and the nails too square. Her face, also, was not of a distinguished kind, but she was handsome, being of the Roman type with very large eyes, a prominent nose, and bold chin. Her complexion was dark, and even slightly sunburned; her hair grew very low down upon her forehead, and was as black as jet. Her lips were over thick, and the teeth she often displayed were white and large, looking as though they could grind up even army bread. The baroness was lively, we should add, and a merry expression often softened her statuesque features. She was at once like Juno, and like a stutler-woman of the Grand Army.

When Bernaville and Loquetières entered the circle which surrounded her, she had just won, and was sweeping up the pile of gold before her, with undisguised satisfaction. Her four partners—*bouillotte* was then played by five people—seemed to be state contractors, or something of the kind.

They had broad chests, fleshy shoulders, and ruddy faces, and they were dressed in bad taste, and talked loudly. They were like the people that Barras entertained in the times of the Directory.

"It is strange!" said the detective to the editor. "We have not taken ten steps, and yet we seem to be in another world. There are only young madmen over yonder; but here I find three well known merchants, from my own neighbourhood; all of them furious liberals. They are subscribers to Touquet's things—you know the fellow who has published the Charter printed on snuff-box lids."

"My dear sir," said Bernaville, "the baroness has no political opinions whatever. She would as willingly win money of Jacobins as of royalists. And the heart of her niece is of the same kind. She smiles equally on the King's guardsmen and on the waifs of Bonaparte's old guard."

"Speaking of guardsmen," he added, taking Loquetières aside, "you know the news of the day, don't you?"

"No, indeed," replied the detective, all ears, for he guessed that he was about to learn something.

"Well, my dear friend, the son of the Marquis de Brouage was killed in a duel last night. The Minister of the Interior sent to the paper this morning, to beg of us not to mention the affair."

"Good heavens! it is murder!" exclaimed Loquetières, feigning the utmost astonishment. "The young man belonged to the king's household, if I am not mistaken. This is another political murder."

"That is not my way of looking at it. Count Henri was a very handsome young man, and he was noted for his social successes. He was very attentive to the Signora Negroni, whom I am now about to point out to you, and when you see her, you won't be surprised that any one should fall in love with her. He was even believed to be her favoured lover, and he most certainly had rivals. One of them must have picked a quarrel with him, and sent him into another world, so as to have things his own way. Believe me, my dear sir, this duel was fought on account of a woman."

"Hum! but if you are right, the Signora Negroni must be a very dangerous woman to know, and she can be but very little affected by the death of her admirer, as she is receiving company to-night."

"She is, perhaps, unaware of the count's death. I am curious to find out, by-the-bye, whether she does know of it or not. Women are all enigmas, my dear friend, and Stella is a very pleasing problem to study. Come and help me to read her fair face. We shall find her in the boudoir, where she is no doubt as usual surrounded by her admirers."

Loquetières did not need urging to accompany Bernaville. He longed to behold the beautiful Negroni, and the more so, as the editor's communications had made him suspicious. He wondered whether Count Henri had really met his death at the hand of some rival. In that case, he Loquetières, must immediately change his tactics, and look for the murderer among the lovers of Stella, instead of among the enemies of the Bourbons. All the information which he had gathered since his arrival was most contradictory. He felt perplexed, and made ready to strain every nerve to find out Stella Negroni's secrets. He entered the room with Bernaville, and was fairly dazzled at sight of the incomparable Italian beauty.

He was in the habit of constantly seeing another wonderfully beautiful woman, Octavie de Saint-Hélier, whom he fully appreciated; she and her father were well aware that he did. But he had not believed that so perfect a creature lived as the young woman whom he now perceived at the end of the boudoir.

She was dressed in black, as though in mourning for her dead lovers, and the warm, opaque whiteness of her complexion contrasted wonderfully well with the dark dress she wore. Her hair fell in thick coils upon her neck, and her eyebrows formed two arches which seemed traced with a brush, such was their regularity. Her eyes were not like the emerald orbs of the divine Octavie. They were black diamonds, and had more softness and less lustre than Mademoiselle de St. Hélier's. Her countenance, less variable and expressive, was also more pleasing in its soft and thoughtful character.

The passions visible on the features of the chevalier's daughter were absent from Stella's pure face; still it was easy to divine that there was hidden passion in her nature, just as there is fire slumbering in Mount Etna

beneath a mantle of snow. Oriental as to the character of her beauty, Stella was in heart, no doubt, a true Italian. Contrary to Bernaville's expectation, she was not surrounded as usual by a court. One man alone, seated upon a low stool almost at her feet, was talking with her, and it was easy to divine from his gestures that his theme was love.

This admirer, who had thus succeeded in obtaining a private interview alone in the midst of so numerous a company, had his back turned to Loquetières and his guide, but the Signora Negroni, who seemed to be listening with ill subdued emotion, faced them, and immediately, either by a sign or a whisper, warned him that two intruders were present. The suitor rose at once and turned round.

"This is a strange coincidence, upon my word!" exclaimed Bernaville. "We were speaking of the tragic death of Count Henri de Brouage, and we find his cousin making a declaration of love. He loses no time, I must say, in consoling Stella Negroni."

"He was playing *creps* a moment ago," said Loquetières, in a low tone. "I cannot believe that he is aware of the fatal event that has taken place."

"Bah! he's a philosopher, a strong minded-man; those sort of people have no decency, and don't doubt anything save the existence of the Divinity, and the holy right of kings. Who knows whether this man doesn't already dream of inheriting his uncle's peerage?"

Loquetières said nothing but thought a great deal. "However, don't let us judge even liberals too harshly, and don't let us disturb the happy couple," whispered the journalist, pulling him by the sleeve.

The detective allowed himself to be led away, and on turning round, he brushed against a man who was rushing into the boudoir, and whom he immediately recognised. It was the Spanish refugee, the nobleman who wore the coral pin. This Castilian did not appear to pay any attention to the two men whom he thus encountered, but continued approaching the Signora Negroni, more slowly however, and indeed he saluted her in a most ceremonious manner.

It was easy to divine that he knew he was observed. Such, at least, was Loquetières' belief, and he wished to see and hear everything, like the "Solitaire" of the song.

To hear what Stella and her admirers were about to say was impossible. To see was difficult, but not impracticable, however, providing he managed matters properly.

Bernaville, like a well-bred man, drew his companion away to avoid seeming to spy upon the trio, but the detective did not care to retreat too far, and he gently disengaged his arm.

"Well," said the editor of the *White Flag*, when they had returned into the drawing-room, "what do you think of the transalpine beauty?"

"I should say that she would turn any man's head, and I am not at all surprised that there should be duels on her account. If Count de Brouage was her lover, as he very likely was, as you asserted just now, he may have been the victim of some one who wished to take his place in the lady's good graces."

"It remains to be seen who this some one was. All the guests are more or less in love with Stella, including the Jacobin marquis. I have heard him more than once paying her stupid compliments, which he must have learnt by heart at Versailles before the war in America."

"I see that he has not accompanied his friend, the Spaniard, into the boudoir."

"No, he must have left. He does not like to retire late. That isn't because he has any speeches to make, for he never speaks now. But he must spend his nights in corresponding with the King's enemies."

"You really think, then, that he is conspiring?" said Loquetières, assuming an innocent air.

"My dear fellow, do the liberals do anything else? Only, the leaders among them keep in the background, and let the madmen who wish to play a prominent part get themselves guillotined; while they themselves loudly protest of their respect for constitutional government. But let us say no more about these prudent revolutionists, and return to the divine Stella. What pleases me in her is that she isn't at all like our fashionable dolls. She does not wear her hair or dress in any fanciful way, and she doesn't strike attitudes. She is beautiful, and that's all there is about her."

"Beautiful like a statue, my dear Bernaville, and marble is cold," replied Loquetières.

"Loquetières, you know nothing about it. This statue has a heart, I'll answer for that. If you doubt it, look at her eyes."

"Yes, she is veiling them now, her long eyelids are lowered, and she looks as though she had heard painful news."

"You may be right. The bad news, why, I can guess it. Señor Gomez y Valdez y—never mind the rest—has probably heard from his friend the deputy that Count de Brouage was killed last night, and he has hastened to tell Stella all about it. These Castilians are wanting in tact."

"Hum! this one is perhaps not at all sorry to be able to tell the beauty that the young man is dead. Spaniards are as jealous as the devil, and said to be ferocious when in love. But, if your conjectures are right, I should be curious to know what the cousin of the victim feels just now."

"So should I; unfortunately, he has turned his back to us, and as I don't like to watch people, I shall not wait for him to turn round. Besides, I have business at my office, and I wish you good night. Come some morning to the Café Lemblin. All the liberal and classical school breakfast there. We will scarce the revolutionary big-wigs between us, you and I."

Thereupon, without waiting for Loquetières' reply, Bernaville turned abruptly upon his heel and went away.

Sartine's disciple was used to the whimsicalities of the journalist, who was one of the most peculiar men of that time. He did not attempt to detain him, knowing well enough that the editor of the *White Flag* never did anything but what he took it into his head to do. Besides, he had no further need of him or of any one. The information which he had collected was sufficient. He only had to arrange it, compare it, and draw his conclusions. And this was work which he excelled in.

His precise and logical mind had already dismissed all the unimportant persons present, and dwelt only upon such as seemed to be worth studying. The baroness seemed to him insignificant. The deputies of the opposition had evidently nothing to do with the matter in hand. Nor the student Marcas either. The young fellow had no doubt gone off, as he was not to be seen. There remained Stella, Fabien de Brouage, and the Spanish grandee. What tie united these two men, and what could they have to say to Signora Negroni, of so interesting a nature?

Their conversation together was still being kept up, and had become animated. Loquetières did not lose a single gesture they made. His instincts told him that they were speaking of the event of the day,

and that they had had something to do with it, at least in an indirect manner.

He kept his eyes upon them, and by dint of doing so, he remarked a detail in the Italian woman's attire which he had not at first noticed. In the braided coils of her thick black hair, she wore a long silver ornament, tipped at either end by a large coral knob.

"Oh, oh!" said Loquetières to himself, "that ornament is very like the pin worn by the hidalgo. Is it a sign? Why do they wear all this coral? I know that it is still fashionable in Italy, but is it worn in Spain? I must find out something more about this refugee, and I shall begin by following him when he leaves this house."

This plan was perhaps a good one, but while waiting to put it into execution, the detective found himself in a strange position. Placed as he was at the end of the room, at two steps from the open boudoir, he must sooner or later attract the notice of the Italian woman and of the men beside her. Indeed, he had perhaps already attracted it, as they frequently turned their heads towards him. Now, he was especially desirous of keeping them in sight, and did not, therefore, wish to leave his place. But he must have some pretext for remaining for so long near the boudoir. Closely on his left, *écarté* was being played. By approaching the table he would still keep near the group in the boudoir. "That is what I will do," thought he. "I will mingle with the players, I will bet also, if necessary, and no one will notice that I am watching."

He went slowly to the left, and, mingling with the lookers-on at the game, he took up his position so adroitly, that although he faced the green table he was able to keep an eye on the suspicious party.

Play ran high. On each side there were piles of louis, and Loquetières admired the courage with which so much money was risked when gold was so scarce. It seemed all the more surprising to him as the gamblers did not belong to the same social category as those who were playing *bouillotte*. At this *écarté* table there were young fellows, and men who looked as though they had formerly belonged to the Imperial army. The half pay granted by the government to soldiers who had not consented to serve the Bourbons was barely enough to support them, and a looker-on might very well wonder where these old soldiers had derived the means of making such heavy ventures.

"There's a fellow who, if I am not mistaken, was nothing but a captain under the usurper, and yet he is risking two hundred francs," thought Loquetières. "The baroness's drawing-room is a strange place. The poor become rich there; but I don't believe in miracles, and I must find out the meaning of all this." And he mentally added: "The Spaniard and the viscount are still there. They are speaking more quietly now. They must be arranging some affair or other. What can it be? They cannot be talking about the price of stock; the woman would not listen so attentively."

While he followed this reasoning in his own mind, one of the players who had lost rose up, saying: "There is decidedly nothing more to be done. Our side is in a sorry plight. To change the luck we must have some one who has not yet held the cards." And at that moment, espying Loquetières' honest countenance, the man who had been cleaned out said to him: "Do you play *écarté*, sir?"

"Not very well," stammered the detective, who did not care to hamper his movements by taking part in a game.

"No matter; we will advise you, and you'll win, I am sure of it. I am a good physiognomist, and I am sure that you will be lucky."

The person who made this engaging remark was an officer in plain clothes, but one who certainly served the Bourbons, for he was quite young and lacked the fierce look of the soldiers who had been put on half pay after the fall of the Empire. Moreover, the players, were divided into two camps. On one side were the royalists, and on the other the Bonapartists.

The royalists were having a very bad time of it. They had just been beaten for the fourth time by an old soldier, who appeared to be as much inclined for fighting as for playing, for he was looking in a provoking manner at the men who had been defeated. He knew that five or six of the comrades with him would uphold him whatever he said or did. These were strong, able-bodied fellows with most energetic faces.

His adversary's friends, however, were not at all like the old soldiers, and they began trying to induce Loquetières to play ; under any other circumstances he would have asked nothing better than to have " fought for the good cause," for he did not dislike *écarté*, and played it extremely well. However, he did not wish to lose sight of what was going on in the boudoir, and he would have quite refused to hold the cards, if he had not realised that if he were seated he would be better able to see the group that occupied his thoughts. The table was placed near the wall in such a way that the bettors were grouped on one side alone, and did not hide the sofa where the Signora Negroni had just seated herself between her two admirers.

Loquetières said to himself that after all he ran less risk of attracting her attention if seated at the table. A man who is playing a game is not an object of suspicion, as he is supposed to be attending only to his cards. He hoped, besides, that he would not long be detained, and, moreover, the conversation in which he was interested did not appear to be drawing to a conclusion. He feared, too, that it might appear singular if he refused a polite invitation, and he was not sorry to conciliate some of the guests whose political opinions were similar to his own.

"Gentlemen," said he, seating himself, "I don't wish to disoblige you by refusing. I must say, however, that I only play for small stakes."

No one objected, but he was vigorously supported, and piles of gold were at once placed beside his own venture, which was simply a double louis. Confidence returned to the defeated party, and as the conquerors wished to pursue their advantage, the stakes of the royalists were quickly covered by the men of the old guard.

The deal fell to Loquetières, who, when turning up the trump card, bowed, and said to his adversary : "I have the honour to salute you, sir."

However, his opponent, instead of making a polite nod, threw down a card as though he had been fencing, then another, and then another ; and when he had flung down the last with a gesture not unlike a blow, he exclaimed : "The *role* !"

Loquetières saw fit to assume a look of distress, but he did not really mind losing a couple of points, for he beheld a scene that was much more interesting to him than this game.

In the boudoir matters had changed. Stella Negroni, half reclining upon the sofa cushions, was playing absently with her fan ; the two men had risen and continued talking together, but their conversation could not have interested the fair Italian, for she no longer listened. "What is the viscount telling the Spaniard ?" thought Loquetières. But he was now obliged to pay attention to his game.

The old soldier again scored the point ; and he had the king besides ; his political opinions not preventing him from turning the monarch to account.

Thus the old guard was victorious all along the line, and the young army looked forlorn enough.

Loquetières, however, did not show the slightest emotion. He considered his double louis lost, but he did not think such a price too high for his seat, for matters were becoming more and more interesting in the boudoir. A man had entered that apartment by a door which the spy had not previously noticed, and which he could not now discern; now, this man was the doorkeeper of the house.

"There must be something fresh," thought Loquetières to himself; "the Italian has come to make a report to his mistress. Something is about to take place which I must see. Fortunately the veteran has four points. I shall have lost in a couple of minutes more, and be free to go where I please."

"It is your turn," said one of the bettors to Loquetières. "Try not to lose the fifth point, as we have lost the other four."

"Ah! sir," replied Saint-Hélier's friend, "I fear that you placed your confidence badly in relying on me; however, I will do my best." And he began to shuffle the cards, observing the boudoir at the same time, and saying to himself: "How did the doorkeeper come in? There must be a secret door to the room. What has this Calabrian Cerberus brought to Signora Negroni? She does not seem to be much disturbed, but she turned pale, I thought."

"Ah! the king!" exclaimed the young officer. "That is a good omen. Mark it off!"

Loquetières did so, but without any special interest, and took up his cards without any wish to find anything but sevens and eights in his hand. He saw, with great annoyance, however, that he had five trump-cards headed by the queen. Had he dared he would have "proposed," but he was watched and obliged to make the *vole*.

The young officers now began to hold up their heads, and the old guard grumbled. "Silence in the ranks!" said the old officer who held the cards. "The game isn't lost for three points made by a civilian. After the entrance of the allied armies we still had the 20th of March."

"And after the 20th of March you had Waterloo," retorted the royalist officer who had recruited Loquetières.

The Bonapartist looked up, and surveying his enemy from head to foot, replied: "As for you, Monsieur de Waterloo, we'll have a talk by-and-bye, if you like."

"Whenever you please."

"Good!" thought the spy, "another duel! This must be followed up. Who knows whether it wasn't this old snarler who was at work last night? I hope he'll win this game of cards. I never more needed to be at liberty."

"It's agreed," resumed the half-pay captain; "we will have a talk, young man. Meantime, you shall see the return from Elba. I'll wager my old boots against your new epaulets, that I will turn up *Cæsar!*"*

He turned up the nine of spades, however, and Loquetières, who was praying for his adversary's success, was greatly vexed. He had just seen the doorkeeper disappear, and conjectured that he had gone as he had come, by some secret stairs, and he now perceived that Stella Negroni, the viscount, and the Spanish hidalgo were coming into the drawing-room.

"Where are they going?" thought Fouché's pupil; "and who knows whether I shall be able to follow them up? What cursed luck, upon my

* In England we should say the king of diamonds.—*Trans.*

word ! Never mind, I will 'propose' if I have good cards, and play as I please if I haven't, and then it will be over the sooner. My backers will make an outcry, but what do I care for that ?"

His backers did indeed make an outcry, for, although he had a splendid hand, he "proposed."

"I refuse !" exclaimed the veteran trooper, who thought himself sure of a point, for he had two kings including *Cæsar*, and a couple of trumps.

He lost, however, and his "refusal" cost him the game. Loquetières was inwardly furious, but his partners were delighted, and he was highly complimented upon the skilful manner in which he had managed to secure the victory. He did not deserve this praise, and he was enraged at having been so well served by chance. Fortune is like woman, and favours but those who scorn her. Thus it is that poor people never succeed, and sincere love is never reciprocated.

The unwilling winner wriggled uneasily on his chair, and stretched his neck to try to see what was going on in the other part of the room, and especially what the mysterious trio were doing. He was so much perplexed that he forgot to take up his four louis, and the young officer behind him had to ask him several times to divide the winnings, and take the sum due to him.

"Thanks, sir !" said this lively young man, "you have scattered the army of the Loire. I hope that you will now start in pursuit of it."

"All my pleasure is spoiled," replied Saint-Hélér's friend. "You have been quarrelled with, and I am grieved at being in a measure the cause of—"

"My fighting a duel ? I'm delighted, upon my word I am ! I haven't fought for three months, and I am itching to do so. Besides, I can avenge my comrades. A guardsman was killed only last night."

"Yes, I heard some whispering about that sad event," said Loquetières who was always on the look-out for news. "Is the cause of the quarrel known ? Does any one know—"

"Will you condescend to attend to the game ?" curtly observed a player who had just taken the loser's place.

This individual seemed to be intimate with the veterans whom the spy had beaten, but he was not like them in the least. He was not thirty, and was fashionably attired, but he wore the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour, and his whiskers were cut square on a level with the lobes of his ears. He must have served in 1814 in the Emperor Napoleon's Guard of Honour.

Loquetières was very anxious to get away from this young admirer of the usurper, but he realised that his abrupt departure would attract attention. Now, what he most feared was to be noticed, for the last part of the task which he had undertaken was the hardest. He wished to follow the Spanish grandee, whose coral pin was ever in his mind ; and to spy upon a man properly one ought not to be spied upon oneself. He resigned himself, however, though most unwillingly, to play another game ; but he turned several times on pretence of consulting his backers as to the sharing of the winnings from the imperialist party.

This intentional turning procured him the delightful satisfaction of seeing that the trio, in whom he was interested, were still in the room. Fabien was trying to approach the dice-table ; the Castilian was talking to some gentlemen, quite unconspirator-like in manner and dress, and the fair Stella, standing beside her good aunt, was fanning herself, and listening to the compliments of the financiers at the *bouillotte*-table.

"Good !" thought Loquetières. "They don't suspect me. I shall find

them again presently, and meantime, I may as well win a little money from these swash-bucklers here. It will be just so much out of the enemy's pocket, for it never came from the pension fund."

Quieted and at ease, the detective now laid down his stakes, and took up the cards, with the intention of playing properly, and winning if he could. His wishes were met. The Guard of Honour did not hold out for five minutes against an opponent, who held the king and three trumps at each deal, and the game was won in two rounds. The guardsman was followed by a gigantic officer, whose bony face seemed to have been burnt in Egypt, tanned in Spain, and frost-bitten in Russia. This volunteer of '92 had become a pretorian from having conquered too much under "Cæsar." He staked five louis, which he called napoleons, and lost them without making a single point, but not without swearing between his teeth.

Then came a spectacled gentleman, who appeared to have been an army-surgeon, and who defended himself somewhat more ably. He was conquered, however, by a king turned up at the right moment. The "grand army" was expiating its triumphs, and had got as far as the retreat from Moscow. And, just as had been the case after the battle of the Beresina, there was lively discontent, and even a motion to disband. Munition was probably giving out, as there had been a great consumption of cartridges.

All these brave, retired soldiers looked furiously at Loquetières, who smiled placidly, and no longer felt so anxious to go, as he had won four games, and was beginning to like it. But he did not forget to glance behind him very often, and he saw each time, with renewed pleasure, that Signora Negroni and the man with the coral pin were still in the rooms. Stella was bending over to whisper in the baroness's ear, and the hidalgo was talking with a man whose back alone was visible to the inquisitive detective.

"Come, gentlemen, whose turn is it now?" said one of the royalist officers in a bantering tone.

The place opposite to Loquetières was vacant, and those who had been cleaned out, showed but little disposition to take it again.

"Kings are against us," growled the surgeon.

"There is one called Cæsar, however," said one of the Count d'Artois' guardsmen.

"Cæsar is at Saint Helena, and his successor keeps us on half pay."

"No one would think it. You stake more money than we do."

"Do you insinuate that the Bourbon police pays us?" asked the veteran.

"Take it as you please," replied the guardsman.

"Well, young man, I shall be near the cannon of the Palais Royal at twelve o'clock to-morrow."

"I shall be there at a quarter before."

"Another duel!" thought Loquetières. "Duels strew the ground here! It fairly bewilders one to be among so many murderers!"

"Come, gentlemen!" called out another officer, "let us finish. Find someone to play, or one of us will take the place."

"Someone to play! I'm willing!" said a voice which made the chevalier's friend start with terror.

The voice was that of the man who had been talking with the Spaniard, and who, after politely bowing to him, had turned and walked up to the *écarté-table*.

"Colonel Fournès!" exclaimed the losers in a chorus. "Ah! now we shall see!"

The spy had no need to hear the new-comer's name, to know who he was. The colonel was one of the most conspicuous men of the party which regretted the fall of the Empire. He had served under Napoleon I. with glory; he was rich, still young, and he hated the existing government. This was more than enough to make him an Imperialist leader, and he had taken a more or less direct part in all the conspiracies directed against the Bourbon rule since 1815. Compromised in the affair of the "Black Pin," he had appeared in October, 1817, before the Assizes of the Seine. He was acquitted, thanks to the good offices of General de Brouage, who had commanded him in the 9th Dragoons, and he had remained in Paris, where he was closely watched, although he did not appear to trouble himself any more about political matters.

Now, there had been a day in Loquetières' life, an evil day, when this notable detective had been personally obliged to arrest this terrible colonel, who had certainly not forgotten the Judas who had formerly drawn him into a snare. "If he sees me, I am lost," said Saint-Héliér's friend to himself. "He only comes here to conspire, and he will at once guess that I have come only to spy. I shall be killed in the street before I can reach home."

While thinking of some way to escape the lamentable fate which he foresaw, the unlucky detective blew his nose furiously, to try and conceal his face.

Meanwhile, the colonel came forward with a bland smile. He bowed politely to the players, even to those of the opposite party, shook hands with one or two old comrades, and seated himself in the vacant chair, saying: "Are we beaten, gentlemen?"

"Utterly routed, colonel!" said the ex-major.

"Bah! the battle of Marengo was lost at three and won again at six. I am not Desaix, but I will try to check the rout. I will hold all the stakes on the opposite side, and as to the winnings, I will take in with me all who like."

Loquetières did not join in the murmur of applause which greeted this proposal. He was as uneasy as though his chair had been set with thorns, and hung his head more and more. The colonel, meantime, did not busy himself about him. He had laid two rouleaux of gold upon the table, and was waiting, without looking at his adversary, for the deal.

Colonel Fournès had a pleasant face. He was fair, rather slender, but well built. He was not more than forty, and his manners evinced none of the usual roughness of the soldier. He was, indeed, more like a man of fashion, than an officer, with an expression that would have been mild, had not a piercing look, like the flashing of a sabre, shot every now and then from his blue eyes.

"The stakes are laid. It seems to me that we may as well begin, sir," said he to Loquetières with a bland smile.

"I could swear that he doesn't recognise me," thought the spy, coughing to disguise his agitation. "No, I am deceiving myself, it is impossible that he can have forgotten my face. Good Heavens! what shall I do?"

He was so greatly overcome that he forgot to take up the money which he had won, and which he certainly did not intend to lose. If he had taken any heed of it he would have straightway pocketed it, and all the more readily as his fertile mind had just suggested to him a means of getting away.

He meant to make off, but it was necessary to do so without being hindered. Now, he said to himself that if he raised the siege before beginning the game, Colonel Fournès might very well do the same, and follow him out of the room on to the staircase, and even further, to cut off his ears when he caught him. However, when once the game had begun, the formidable colonel would no longer be free to go off, for he would doubtless make it a point of honour to stand by his comrades who had confided their last remaining napoleons to him.

Fournès must surely entertain a nasty remembrance of his acquaintance with the person who had formerly arrested him; but, after all, he did not positively know that Loquetières had come to the baroness's to ply his calling as a spy. And, if he thought that he had, he probably would not care to make a scene in the rooms, in the presence of many people who were of opposite politics. Loquetières even ended by saying to himself, that the elegant conspirator was not a man to deal out justice with his own hand, and if he wished to chastise an agent of the secret police, he would tell some inferior to do so for him. Subalterns would not feel any scruple in thrashing a detective, rather the reverse.

The great point was to slip away, without allowing Fournès time to give orders to any hanger-on, and he could not well do so at an *écarté* table under the very eyes of five or six royalist officers. Somewhat encouraged by these timely reflections, Fouché's pupil raised his head, and ventured for the first time to look the enemy in the face. "Shall we cut, sir?" said the colonel in his mild, but sonorous voice.

"I begin to hope that he no longer remembers me," thought Loquetières. "Still, that is all the more reason for getting away as soon as I can. His memory may return by-and-bye."

The deal fell to the Imperialist soldier, and he began to distribute the cards with a polite bow. The time had come for Loquetières to play the cunning part which was to prove a pretext for departure. He passed his hand over his forehead, pinched his lips, and assumed a suffering look. "It is your turn to play, sir," said Fournès to him in a courteous tone.

"I propose," murmured the spy, in a faint voice.

"I refuse."

Loquetières played with a trembling hand and did not take a trick.

"Desaix is coming up!" exclaimed an old soldier.

"What ails you, sir?" now asked the colonel, in a tone of interest.

"Are you ill?"

"Yes," stammered the detective, who had no difficulty in turning pale, for he was really very frightened. "I—I am not well."

"Rest yourself. I will wait till you feel better."

"I am greatly obliged to you—but I—yes—I am too ill to go on—I do not know what I am about—I should like to go out."

"This is not the first time, however, that the cit has been under fire," sneered the army surgeon.

"The devil! you will destroy our luck, my dear sir," remonstrated one of the royalist officers.

"I am very sorry, indeed, gentlemen, but I assure you that I can't stay any longer. I want air—I am stifling."

"Good! you have the vapours like a pretty woman. It's unnatural," said the sceptical army surgeon.

"Well, sir," said the colonel, with the gravest air imaginable, "it would

be cruel to insist upon obliging you to finish the game. I think you had better take a turn in the garden of the house."

"Yes—that's it—in the garden; by walking about I shall recover—my giddiness will go away, I hope, and I will then return."

"Meantime, you leave us with our two points only!" exclaimed one of the growling Imperialists.

"I am very sorry, but one of these gentlemen will perhaps have the kindness to hold my cards."

"For myself, I see no objection to that," said the colonel.

"I will take the cards, then," said the officer, who had been challenged for having mentioned Waterloo.

"Thanks! oh, thanks! I am greatly obliged to you, and to this gentleman also," said Loquetières, rising with apparent effort. And as he had still some coolness left, he said, in order to make it appear as if he intended to return: "I have six hundred and forty francs at stake. Will you have the kindness to keep them for me, if we win, and I am not here before the end of the game?"

"It's agreed," replied the officer, seating himself at the table.

Loquetières, astonished and delighted at the success of his trick, went with a tottering step towards the door, but he took care to glance right and left, and even to turn round once or twice. He had the inexpressible satisfaction of seeing that the colonel was going on with the game, and he remarked in passing that the baroness was still at the *bouillotte*-table, that the Spanish nobleman was still behind her, and that Signora Negroni had vanished.

"I am safe!" he said to himself, as he took up his cloak in the ante-room; "but no matter, I have no time to lose. Fournès has merely to say the word to set one of his cut-throats after me. I hope I shall find a vehicle to take me home."

And he went hastily down the stairs, on which he had met Marcas, the student. "What a night I have had of it! I haven't much to tell the marquis," he thought; "but I hold several clues. Viscount Fabien acts suspiciously, and I also suspect the Spaniard, as well as the baroness and her niece. I was wrong in choosing mild measures, for there is conspiring going on here. Colonel Fournès and that coral pin, all that is clearly wrong, and if I had had this place surprised to-night, I should have caught a great many fish, and big ones too, in my net. But those women won't have to wait long. I'll arrest them to-morrow. Ah! but to-morrow will be too late. The birds will have taken flight. What if I go to the Prefecture at once? No, it would be time lost. They are all asleep there, and there is no permanent service now. Ah! the government wasn't so foolish as that in the time of the Duke of Otranto, or even in that of Robespierre. Never mind; I will not be worsted! I see that there is a deal to do. All these old soldiers rolling in gold, and two duels about nothing at all! I will send some men to-morrow to the Palais Royal, and the Café Lemblin—for I must find out the names of those veterans who picked quarrels with the royalists—and then we shall see. If I find out anything like the Black Pin affair, I should have no trouble at all in getting five hundred thousand francs from the secret fund; and I could retire; buy a château; and I have my eye already upon a wife, if I can win her consent—and she must consent; in a few days from now I will see Saint-Hélier and ask him for a decided answer."

This long soliloquy only ended when Loquetières reached the foot of the

staircase. In the hall, he saw the doorkeeper quietly talking with two coachmen, who had come in to warm themselves. The Calabrian did not look at all as though he were conspiring, but bowed most politely to the individual who had questioned him a couple of hours before.

"He has an open countenance. Ah! appearance is nothing after all!" thought the detective; and at the same time he went towards the door, and, without setting foot in the street, glanced in every direction to see if any suspicious looking person was near the house. While he was thus engaged he had the good luck to be hailed by the driver of a hackney-coach, of which he at once availed himself. Pretending to fear the cold March wind, he even waited till the hack came into the courtyard and got in without approaching the street.

His fears were groundless, however, and he might have walked home unmolested, for the man who had so greatly alarmed him was not thinking of following him. While the vehicle was taking Saint-Hélic's friend home, Colonel Fournès was losing the game at *écarté* which he was playing with the young guardsman. Once more the grand army, so long victorious, was beaten, and the fight then ended, for there was no more ammunition on the Imperialist side. The sixty-four louis belonging to Loquetières were taken up by the winner, who vainly tried to find his partner to give them to him, and finally left the money with the baroness's valet.

Fournès alone might have held out, but he was not disposed to dispute the victory. He rose with a polite bow to his opponent—the terrible colonel was always polite—and went away, not without addressing a few consoling words to his comrades, whose pockets were empty, and whose hearts were sore. He did not wish to take any part in the arrangements which was about to be made as to the duels of the morrow, and he went towards the *bouillotte-table*.

The Castilian was still looking on at Madame de Casanova's play. Fournès brushed against him as he passed, and said, in a tone audible to him alone: "I have seen Judas; I must speak with you."

Then, taking his way across the room, he mingled with the crowd around the dice-table. The players were no longer the same. The deputy of the Opposition, cleaned out by Viscount de Brouage, had left the place, and the viscount himself also had gone. No one having offered to hold the bank, the losers, led by a hope of winning back what they had lost, were playing a "turning game," in which each took the dice-box in turn, the stakes being held by any one who would or could hold them. Fournès contented himself with looking at them, and was soon joined by the Spaniard, who took his arm and led him into the embrasure of a window facing the garden.

"You are sure, then," said the wearer of the coral pin, "that the man was a spy?"

"I am quite sure of it. He is the man who arrested me four years ago. He came here to find out the truth of the reports about this house, and as he is a thorough bloodhound, he saw and noticed everything."

"He saw me talking with Fabien and Stella in the boudoir."

"And he recognised me perfectly. This is more than enough to enable him to draw conclusions. He must be already on his way to the Prefecture of Police."

"We were wrong, perhaps, to let him go."

"What could we do? It would have been of no use to quarrel with him. Men of his stamp don't fight, and especially not under a street-lamp, which,

besides, is a dangerous method. It is the death of the son of Brouage, my old colonel, that has set this spy on our track. The police were not concerning themselves about the baroness. But they ascertained that Count Henri came here frequently, and now that they have got on the track, they won't let us alone unless we frustrate them."

"I have made my plans," replied the Spaniard, coldly. "To-morrow, there will be no one in this house. You know that my measures have long been taken as to what course to follow if our secret were surprised."

"You must let me know where we shall meet in future."

"To-morrow evening the high *venta* will be informed."

"Very well. I shall be there. Let us separate. Ah! just one word before you go! Have you decided about the test to which the viscount is to be subjected? I hope that he will go through it honourably, but I believe that it is indispensable so as to reassure the brethren who mistrust him, because he is the nephew of a peer of France."

"It will take place to-night."

"Then, till to-morrow," said the colonel, and he turned his back on his companion.

IV

THE conversation between the Spaniard and Colonel Fournès had lasted but a moment, and no one had noticed it. Every one was busy gambling, and players never know what is going on around them. Some fellows who were quite stumped had gone off; others were about to follow.

The ranks were thinning, and the party was evidently about to break up, for everything was managed with propriety at Madame de Casanova's house, and dawn never found the players with cards or dice in hand. The *écarté* playing had come to a stop, the dice-boxes no longer rattled, and only *bouillotte* lingered for awhile. There had been mishaps at the round-table, and the unlucky financiers would not let go at once; but the baroness, who had won a large amount, had relinquished her place to some one else, and gone to the boudoir to enjoy her triumph.

The Spaniard went slowly through the drawing-room. He examined, as he passed, the faces of those who were still struggling against fortune, and saw no suspicious-looking persons among them. The veterans, routed by Loquetières, were talking in one corner of the room, and the royalist officers formed another very animated group not far from them. It was evident they were discussing the duels of the morrow. The capitalists whom the baroness had won from, were, on their side, quarrelling about a bad deal.

The Castilian hidalgo went on without being noticed and slipped into the boudoir where Madame de Casanova, seated where her niece had sat, was fanning herself.

The Spaniard gave her a peculiar look which made her rise at once. "What is the matter?" she asked.

"We have been betrayed. We must leave."

"Good!" said the baroness, quietly. "I expected as much. *E finita la musica*. I am ready. What do you mean to do with me, Orso?"

"I don't know as yet. You will receive my instructions to-morrow."

"I shall pray to San Gennaro to be sent back to Italy."

"Italy! you mustn't think of that, FrANCESCA! You would be recognised

and arrested as soon as you passed the frontier. We sha'n't set eyes on our country till it is free."

"May the Madonna grant that that day may soon come, for I am dying of weariness in this city where the sun does not rise fifty times a year, and when it does, looks as pale as though it had a fever."

"You are dying of weariness, you say? I thought that you liked cards."

"So I do," replied the baroness, heartily. "I cannot help that, Orso, it is in my blood. My father had gambled and lost his fortune when King Ferdinand's *shirri* arrested him. I am fond of cards on account of the excitement they bring me, but I love my country better than gambling."

"I know that, Francesca. If I doubted you, I should not tell you our secrets; I rely upon your absolute devotion, and I shall soon, perhaps, ask you for a fresh proof of it."

"If you need my life, Orso, you may take it, it is yours, for you risked your own to save my poor Giacomo, and if our brothers in Calabria had been as brave as you are, I should not now be a widow. Dispose of Francesca Ranese as of a slave. You have made a baroness of me; make me an apple-seller or a street-cleaner; I don't care so long as it is in my country's service and for our holy cause."

"There is no question of that. But I may have a mission to confide to you—a mission which will oblige you to leave Paris and live in a solitary place, an old ruin which is little better than a prison."

"Wherever you send me, Orso, I will go. And in separating from you there is but one thing I ask. I entreat you not to forget that Cecilia d'Ascoli has sacrificed everything to you and that she has nobody but you in the world to protect her."

"Why do you remind me of the past?" asked the man whom Bernaville had believed to be a Spaniard. "Does Cecilia complain of me?"

"The poor girl loves you too well to complain. Besides, what should she complain of? Did you not raise her to yourself by marrying her, you who are Prince of Catanzaro, Duke of Corleone and Marquis of Alcamo? Cecilia was the daughter of an untitled gentleman. You didn't chose her either for her birth or her wealth. Left an orphan, she was through charity brought up at the convent of Lanziano and was about to take the veil, when she abandoned the idea of being a nun to consecrate her life to you; you might then have taken advantage of the passionate love she bore you, but you had resolved to marry her. Cecilia owes everything to you Orso; she might have been your mistress, she has become your wife."

"The wife of an exile!"

"An exile who will resume his rank when he has delivered Italy from tyrants and foreigners."

"And who would be hanged by the Austrians if he were found in Naples. No, Francesca, it is not Cecilia who owes me any gratitude. It is I who am indebted to her; and the only thing that I fear in this world is, that I may die before I can reward so much self-sacrifice."

"You love her, and that is all she asks for."

"Yes, I love her!" said Orso, passionately. "I love her, and I suffer because I am forced to condemn her to the odious life which she has consented to lead through patriotism, and which she bears for love of me. I suffer at seeing her defenceless, when these Frenchmen who take her for an adventuress, are paying court to her."

"They take me for an adventuress, also, but I console myself. What does it matter to me what they think of me and the noble girl who is my

foster-child? Cecilia d'Ascoli and Francesca Ranese are serving Italy better by keeping this drawing-room where the defenders of liberty can meet, than by shutting themselves up and merely praying for the deliverance of their country."

"Yes," said the exile, "thanks to you, our brethren have been able to meet and agree together without rousing the suspicions of our enemies. Two women have done more than any of us could effect. We have now fifty *ventas* in full force in Paris, and the Carbonari are established here. But I have nothing more to ask of you. Your task is finished. The time has come for leaving this house. You are suspected. A spy came here to-night. Colonel Fournès pointed him out to me. There were others prowling about the house yesterday, and to-morrow the police will probably search the place. But they will find no one. Luigi just came up by the secret staircase. He saw also the spy who went off a moment ago. I told him to give our servants the word. To-morrow all of them will be living far from this house. You, Francesca, must shut yourself up in your lodgings at Passy."

"Where my neighbours take me for a quiet sort of person, a country-woman, who likes to go to bed early. They have never seen me except in the daytime, and they don't dream that I become a baroness every evening."

"It would be dangerous to play that game any longer. You might be recognised. You must leave Paris, and in forty-eight hours from now."

"And what of Cecilia? She will remain with you, will she not? She will be only too happy, for she hates this kind of life."

"Cecilia will not return to this house again, and she can no longer live in France."

"Have you told her that she will be obliged to go away?"

"No, not yet."

"That is strange. I thought that she looked greatly disturbed while you were talking to her just now. Where is she?"

"She has just gone out by the little garden door, and is waiting for me in the carriage on the Boulevard des Invalides. I am going to join her, and we shall repair to our house in La Petite Pologne, where for ten months we have been hiding our happiness. But let us part. It is time. Time is passing, and we must not be found here. Show yourself for a moment in the drawing-room. It is almost empty, and no one will be surprised if you retire; it is your usual hour. Go down by the private stairs. Luigi will accompany you to Passy."

"I will obey you, Orso," said Francesca, in a tone of emotion, "but before I go, I must embrace Cecilia."

"You shall see her before you go away. I promise you that, but at this moment there is no time to be lost. Farewell!"

And having thus curtailed the entreaties of Francesca, the wearer of the coral pin assured himself, by a glance, that no one was observing him, pressed a knob, hidden in the woodwork, at a corner of the boudoir, and disappeared by the secret door. He found Luigi at the foot of the private stairs, and learned from the faithful servant that all was ready for departure. The three Carbonari who played the part of servants to Madame de Casanova had received their orders, and were only waiting for the departure of their mistress to make off.

The whole household, including the baroness and her pretended niece, had but encamped, so to speak, in the Rue de Babylone. Everybody there

led a double life, and there was no difficulty about disappearing. Orso gave a few brief orders to the most intelligent and devoted of his assistants, the doorkeeper who had so politely received M. des Loquetières, and Luigi listened to them with all the respect due to his supreme chief and an Italian Prince.

For the conspirator whom Bernaville had taken for a Castilian nobleman, exiled by the liberals of Spain, was, in reality, a prince, duke, and marquis in Italy. Still he was a Castilian by descent, and his true name was Hernandez. The titles he bore had been bestowed by Charles III. upon one of his ancestors—the head of a younger branch of the Hernandez family, established in the kingdom of Naples since the seventeenth century. The elder branch had remained in Spain, where its members were *grandees* of the first class. Thanks to his cousin in Madrid, the Prince of Catanzaro had been able to embark upon the coast of Calabria and take refuge first in Majorca and finally in Paris, with a regular passport setting forth that he was a Spanish subject. The connection of the noble exile with the Revolutionary party dated far back. It had begun when Championnet's soldiers entered Naples in 1798. He was then twenty, and, like many other Neapolitan noblemen, an enthusiast as to the new ideas of the day. He was among those who believed in the Parthenopean Republic, and whom King Ferdinand pitilessly exiled as soon as Nelson had once more set him on his throne.

Orso had succeeded in flying, and reaching France. He re-entered Naples with Murat; but the return of the Bourbons once more drove him from his country. However, foreseeing this contingency, he had between 1806 and 1815 sold the immense estates which he owned in the Abruzzi, and thus realised several millions of francs. He devoted his fortune to supporting liberal ideas, and placed himself at the head of the rising of 1820, which the Austrian army so brutally suppressed. This time again the revolutionary prince was frustrated, but he did not give up the struggle. Escaping from Italy, he now tackled the Bourbons of France, as if to avenge himself upon the Bourbons of Italy, and organized in Paris the Carbonari association, which threatened royalty everywhere.

He only lived to conspire; to conspire and to love, for he adored Cecilia d'Ascoli, whom the gamblers believed to be Madame de Casanova's niece. And now, while crossing the garden, he thought less of the political consequences of what had just taken place than of the trouble which would befall his love. Thus reflecting, he glided through the garden doorway on to the Boulevard des Invalides, where a carriage was stationed, driven by a Carbonaro. The prince quickly entered it, and did not need to give any orders to the coachman, who knew well enough where he was to take his master. Cecilia was already seated in the carriage.

"It is you, at last!" she exclaimed, pressing Orso to her heart. "I have scarcely existed since you left me."

"Child!" said Orso, drawing her to him, "what did you fear?"

"Oh! I feared nothing for myself," replied Cecilia. "I was thinking of the spy whom Luigi told us about, and I had a thousand wild fancies. I thought that the police had arrested you. I knew that you would defend yourself, and I trembled lest I might hear a pistol shot. I thought that you might be killed or wounded, for you delayed coming so long!"

"I had to give some instructions to Francesca."

"Instructions? I could have given them myself. I shall see her to-morrow."

"You will not see her to-morrow ; perhaps you will never see her again."

"What do you say? Good heavens! has any misfortune fallen upon her?"

"Be calm, Cecilia ; nothing has happened to her. But she must go away—she must leave Paris."

"Why? what has happened?"

"We have been betrayed. This evening Colonel Fournès recognised a spy, who had been sent to our house, and no doubt his visit will be followed by a search. The police will probably make their appearance this morning, before daylight, perhaps. If Francesca were questioned, all would be lost."

"No, for she would not betray us, even to save her life."

"I know that she is devoted and courageous, but I don't wish her to fall into the hands of our enemies. She has had sorrow enough already for the sake of our cause. She is now on the way to Passy. Luigi goes with her and will not return. Nor our other servants either. When the police appear they will find an empty house, for you must not enter it again."

"Then the odious part which I consented to play in obedience to your wishes is over!" exclaimed Cecilia. "Ah! I could bless that wretched spy for bringing it to an end! For I must tell you, Orso, that I have suffered unheard of torture during the horrible task imposed upon me every night."

"Do you believe, then," said the prince in a hoarse tone, "that I should have hesitated to spare you that painful task if I could only have done so? Do you think that I did not suffer on seeing you surrounded and courted by all those Frenchmen, who only sought amusement, for they are incapable of feeling? Ah! heaven is my witness, that more than once, when I saw them annoy you with their stupid declarations of love, I longed to stab them at your very feet!"

"Then you still love me?"

"Love you? How can you doubt my love and me?"

"I do not doubt you, but I am a woman. I am jealous, and I have a rival."

"A rival?"

"Yes, and that rival is your country."

"Say no more! Do not remind me that I have sworn to risk my life to deliver my country, to give all my thoughts to Italy. I am fighting to free her; I ought to think of Italy alone, but I adore you, Cecilia, and if I were forced to choose between my duty and my love for you, I should not, perhaps, have the courage to think of duty only."

"Perhaps? you say *perhaps*!" replied the young woman sadly. "You are afraid of breaking my heart by confessing that you *would* sacrifice me!"

"I shall never be put to so cruel a test," replied Orso eagerly. "You and I, Cecilia, are one. What fatality could place me in the frightful alternative of ceasing to love you or abandoning a sacred cause? Do we not both of us serve our country? Have you not served it by consenting to play the part of an adventuress, although you bear my name, and will one day bear it openly? I have only risked my life, but you have sacrificed your womanly feelings and your reputation. Do not blush for it; you are purer in my eyes than if you were living as a princess in our palace in Naples. The end justifies the means. I would become a servant if it were necessary for the cause. Our brethren are indebted to me for being now

reorganised and reunited ; in those rooms, where you need not again appear, I succeeded in recruiting soldiers for the cause of liberty among all classes, even among the enemy. There is not a regiment which does not count some of us in its ranks. The head of one of the *ventas* is the nephew of a peer of France."

Orso, while speaking, had his arm around Cecilia's waist. He thought that she now started, and an idea entered his mind which made him frown and grow silent. "Who has betrayed us?" asked the young woman after a pause.

"I don't know," replied the prince, with a gloomy air, "but I will know, and the traitor shall pay the penalty he has incurred. Perhaps we have not even been denounced. Colonel Fournès thinks that the tragic death of the Count de Brouage—our friend Fabien's cousin—seemed suspicious to the government spies. They found out that he came to Francesca's rooms, and that he was even there last night."

"He wasn't there," said Cecilia, cagerly.

"He came to the door. Luigi saw him for a moment as he alighted from a hackney-coach. But he did not come in. If he had, you would have seen him, as he came solely on your account."

The young woman remained silent.

"He made love to you, did he not?" asked Orso.

"Yes," replied Cecilia, unhesitatingly.

"And—he loved you?"

"He! oh, no? Men like him cannot love."

"That is true. They only know how to make a display of themselves, show off, and pay stupid compliments."

There was a moment's silence. Cecilia then asked in a trembling voice:

"Was he killed in a duel?"

"It is said that he was."

"Who killed him?"

"I don't know."

"Then he did not fight with one of the brethren?"

"No. If he had I should already know it. But why do you ask that?"

"Because other officers whom we received have fallen in duels, and their antagonists were—"

"Carbonari! I know that. But those were regular duels. I authorised them to fan the hatred of our brethren for the royalists, while waiting for the conspiracy to ripen. There were two quarrels to-night in Francesca's drawing-room. Two men of the royal-guard quarrelled with two former soldiers of Napoleon. But the Count de Brouage was killed at night time, and there were no seconds. It was almost a murder, and we do not murder."

"Ah!" sighed the young woman, as though relieved of a heavy weight of anxiety.

Orso looked at her and by the light of the coach-lamps perceived that she was extremely pale. "I understand your thoughts," he said slowly. "You imagined that I had ordered one of the brethren to kill this man because I was jealous of him. You do not reply. Then I have guessed aright?" and he added with an emotion which he could not conceal: "I thought that you knew me better, Cecilia. I esteem you too highly to believe that you could be touched by the stupid gallantry of a coxcomb. If I were jealous, it would be of a man who loved you as Italians love, because I might fear

that such a man would lead you, perhaps, to share the passion with which you inspired him.

"What would you do in such a case?" asked Cecilia, trembling.

"I should not intrust any one else with the task of vengeance; I should challenge the man, and kill him. Yes, I would kill him," repeated Orso, with a dark look, "were he even my best friend, my very brother!"

He had withdrawn his arm from about the young woman's waist, and this time was not aware that she was shuddering.

The drive was almost at an end. The horses had just gone up the steep Rue du Rocher at a trot. They stopped in front of a garden-gate at the corner of this street, and of the road which ran along the outer wall of Paris. At that time there were but few houses in this lonely neighbourhood, and that which Stella Negroni had hired, under another name, when she arrived in Paris, was quite isolated, standing in the midst of a kind of park with plots of waste ground around it. She there lived the kind of life which she preferred, waited upon by an Italian woman and one of the prince's tenants who had followed him into exile. This was the nest where she hid her happiness. Every night at about three o'clock, when she had played her part at the baroness's, Cecilia went away by a private staircase, got into a carriage, and did not again return to the house in the Rue de Babylone till the following evening at dinner time. Madame de Casanova and her pretended niece had from the outset received no visits before four in the afternoon, and their servants were quite reliable; so no one had been able to find out that they divided their lives in this way. The false baroness was, however, more regularly at her post, and only went to Passy—to play the part of a quiet, gentle woman—at intervals. She had not the same reasons for absenting herself as Cecilia, who every night met Orso at the elegant little abode whither she fled after receiving, much against her will, the homage which she scorned so utterly.

Orso did not openly reside in the Rue du Rocher. He occupied some large rooms in a handsome house in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. When there, he was Don Fernando Hernandez y Zuniga, a rich Spanish nobleman, exiled by the revolutionists of the Peninsula. But he had the key of Cecilia's garden gate, and she found him at her house when she returned there, unless, indeed, he had appeared in the baroness's rooms to meet some of the members of the high *venta*, or to review the principal brethren of the Coral Pin Association. In that case, he withdrew somewhat before the hour when Stella Negroni left the drawing-room, and went to wait for her on the Boulevard des Invalides in his carriage, which took them away together, exchanging caresses and loving words like a couple of lovers who had long been parted.

The drive for the first time seemed a long one that evening. Orso was gloomy; Cecilia was anxious. Both longed to be at home, for they had a deal to say to one another, and it seemed to them that, to speak openly, they must be in the coquettish room where everything reminded them of their mutual love. Teresa, the devoted maid, was waiting for them there. A bright fire shone over the hearth. Heavy curtains hung at the doors and windows. Not a sound from without troubled the soft silence of the charming retreat.

Cecilia made haste to dismiss her maid, and, as soon as she was alone with Orso, she said to him, flinging her arms around his neck: "At last we shall really belong to each other! We shall part no more. If you knew how happy I am! I shall be able to live for you and see you and speak to you

alone. How sweet it is to love one another—and in such a spot as this ! Ah ! Orso, it was time for my sufferings to end ! I no longer had the courage to endure such a life. To dress myself for people I did not wish to see, to have to smile upon them and not to be able to go to you and say, ‘Come, let us fly from this turmoil, this throng,—and to say it with a kiss—ah ! it was too much !’

They exchanged a fond embrace ; and then Orso, gently disengaging himself, took both of Cecilia’s hands in his, and looked at her as if he wished to read her very soul. A rosy flush came to the young woman’s pale cheeks, and her large eyes looked searchingly into those of the exile. “What ails you ?” she asked. “When you look at me like that you frighten me.”

“Cecilia, are you courageous ?” asked Orso.

“What do you mean ? Are you threatened with misfortune ? Are you—”

“Misfortune ?—yes, the greatest of all misfortunes. We must part.”

“Part ! I must lose you !—you send me away !”

“I send you away ! You have forgotten, then, that a priest married us to one another, six years ago, in the church of Lanzaio ? You forget that you are already my wife before Heaven, and that soon, perhaps in a few months more, you will return to Naples as Princess of Catanzaro, Duchess of Corleone and Marchioness of Alcamo ? A princess is not ‘sent away,’ especially by her husband,” added Orso, striving to smile.

“I must have misunderstood you, then,” replied Cecilia ; “there are times when my mind is troubled. Forgive me, I love you so much that a mere word, a mere gesture alarms me. But I shall be calm now. Speak, explain your meaning, speak, I entreat you ! Your silence is killing me.”

“Cecilia,” resumed the exile, in a voice full of emotion, “I love you with all the strength of my soul. I never loved you so dearly as now. And it is because I am so passionately attached to you that we must separate.”

“You love me passionately, you say ? But you wish me to leave you ! So as to devote yourself more entirely to the cause you serve, you condemn me not to see you again ! You think that I am in your way. Ah ! I well knew that a time would come when you would sacrifice me to an idea, a fancy !”

“That is blasphemy, Cecilia ! The freedom of Italy is no ‘fancy.’ I shall attain the noble object I aim at, and you must help me to do so.”

“I am ready to die for my country if I may die near you.”

“Why do you say die ? It is better to live and struggle.”

“Beside you ! That is my dearest wish.”

“Do you think that I should not like to prolong this life which is made so happy by you ? Who but yourself, consoles and sustains me ? Can you believe that I would renounce this happiness if I were not forced to do so ?”

“What forces you ? For eight months past nothing has disturbed our happiness. But the odious comedy I was acting exposed us to dangers which we shall no longer incur, as it is over from to-night, and I return to obscurity. Stella Negroni has ceased to live. Cecilia d’Ascoli has a right to remain at your feet, yes, for I will be your slave to love and defend you.”

“Defend me ? You would ruin me by remaining here, and yourself with me ; and our brethren would curse us, for, if you remained, the association which I have formed with so much difficulty would be scattered ; I, its

supreme leader, I who represent Italy here, should be arrested, and the conspirators who might arise in France after me would no longer aim at the freedom of *our* country."

"Arrested!" exclaimed Cecilia.

"Yes, for I should not have the courage to keep away from you."

"I cannot understand you, Orso."

"What! cannot you understand that the spies on finding the house in the Rue de Babylone empty will look everywhere for the Baroness de Casanova and her niece, and search all Paris to find them? Francesca realised this at once, and when I told her that she must go away she made no objection."

"Francesca has no one to love. Her husband was shot by the Austrians. If Giacomo Ranese still lived, Francesca would not leave him."

"She would resign herself to do so if it were proved to her that she would save him by leaving him. And you will save me, Cecilia, if you consent to a separation which wrings my heart, and which I would not ask for if I could do otherwise. Forget for an instant what you suffer, control your love, appeal to reason and hear me calmly. Stella Negroni will be described to all the agents of the political police. She will be tracked by them without mercy, and it will be easy to find her, as all Paris is familiar with her beauty; and if she dares to show herself—"

"I won't show myself. I won't leave this house. They won't come here to seek me."

"You are mistaken. They will come, for I myself shall be pointed out to them. Don Fernando Hernandez y Zuniga may have so far lived without being annoyed, but the spy who penetrated into the baroness's rooms, to-night, noticed all who were there. I particularly attracted his attention, because I talked for a long time with you, with Fabien de Brouage, Colonel Fournès, and the marquis—"

"This spy, then, is the man who came into the boudoir with Bernaville?"

"You saw him, then?"

"Yes. The viscount was there when he came prowling about me, and I saw afterwards that he was watching us, and me especially."

"You will admit, then, that I also must expect to be watched? I am so sure of it, that I have made up my mind not to appear at a single meeting of the *ventas*, and not to see our friends until the police grow weary of tracking me. My measures are taken in such a way that the brethren of the Coral Pin Association can do without me for a few weeks, or even months, if necessary. I shall reappear when the proper time comes, but I will leave nothing to chance, for it is that which causes conspiracies to fail—chance—and women. Oh! don't protest, Cecilia; you are not a woman to knowingly imperil a noble cause; but, if I were imprudent enough to return to this house, we should certainly be arrested, for in a few days from now it will be impossible for me to take a step without a spy being at my heels. The authorities will, perhaps, wait till to-morrow to come here, but they will easily find a pretext for coming, and when they find that Stella Negroni secretly receives Don Hernandez—"

"We should be ruined!" murmured Cecilia, sinking upon the sofa, as if in despair.

"And so," resumed Orso, "I should be condemned to the torture of knowing that you were here, in the same city as myself, and of being forced to keep away from you. I should be forced to avoid the neighbourhood where you reside, and, if I dared to show myself, to avert my eyes

on passing before the little door by which we have so often entered together."

"No, no, say no more! it would be worse than death, and my courage would fail as well as yours. I could not resist the wish to embrace you. I should try to find you—"

"And, as the house where I live will be watched, we should be lost."

"Why can we not live there together?"

"You are mad! My servants are faithful, but rooms in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré are not guarded like my palace in Naples was, when I was in hiding from King Ferdinand's *sbirri*. In Paris, I am at the mercy of the indiscretion of a neighbour—a doorkeeper—"

The young woman hung her head and said no more. She realised that Orso was right.

He thought she was about to yield, and so he resumed earnestly: "Why struggle against impossibilities? Why expose your life and mine? why compromise the success of a sacred undertaking? I can understand that a separation is painful to you, as well as to me, but you surely do not doubt my love. You know that I adore you, and that it would be my delight to pass my life at your feet, as now."

Cecilia's eyes were full of tears as she looked at the haughty nobleman, who was kneeling before her, swearing how much he loved her, and she murmured, as she lavished her kisses upon him: "Yes, I know, Orso, I know that you love me, and I am ready to obey you. But let me press you to my heart. Let me enjoy the few moments that remain, and dream that the day of separation will never come."

"It has come, Cecilia," replied Orso, gently freeing himself. "I had but an instant to make preparations for your departure, and my orders have been given. To-night a post-chaise, driven by one of the brethren of the Coral Pin Association, will wait for you in the Rue du Rocher; Teresa will go with you, and—"

"What!" exclaimed Cecilia in anguish, "in a few hours from now?"

"It must be so. I should not even have delayed your departure till now did I not expect some news which might change my plans respecting your flight."

"Would it prevent my going?" exclaimed the young woman.

"No. You must leave, no matter what may happen, leave Paris this very day. But I had thought of sending you to England."

"I should die there."

"No, Cecilia, you wouldn't have time to pine away. We have almost attained our purpose. Before three months have passed, the present government of France will be overthrown, Italy will be in open revolt, and you can then return here. Yes, you will not suffer long, and England is the only country where you would be safe. You will post to Calais and sail for Dover. Your passport and Teresa's bear French names, the same as those which you assumed when you hired this house. You will not be disturbed. However, I have another project, and if I am able to carry it out, you will not have to leave France."

"Heaven grant it! I shall be nearer to you."

"Perhaps—this is but a hope, yet perhaps—if your exile lasted sometime, and the police relaxed in their watchfulness, I might be able to go and see you."

"Ah! I breathe once more! Where must I go?"

"It is but a hope, I repeat; however this is the scheme. I have never had

any secrets from you ; you, and the members of the high *venta* alone know that the treasures of the Carbonari escaped by a miracle from the clutches of the Austrians when the latter invaded our country last year, and that they were placed upon a brig manned by faithful brethren. These treasures are still there. Where could we deposit them? All governments are against us, and none would hesitate to seize ten millions deposited at any banker's, and of a suspicious source, merely because deposited by the captain of a petty merchant vessel. The brig carries the entire wealth of our brethren. It is cruising round the French coast, and every month puts in at a little port in Brittany where some of the brethren live. Well then, the time for making use of this gold has come. We are preparing an insurrection in the west. We have three regiments to depend upon and must have our treasure of war at hand. We were looking for a place where it might be securely secreted, when one of the brethren proposed to his *venta*, a château belonging to himself and situated on the sea-shore."

"I can guess what you have thought of," exclaimed Cecilia. "You intend to send me there. Heaven be praised!"

"Yes. I thought of making it your asylum and giving you an important mission. The château is a lonely spot; it is scarcely habitable, and the servants who are living there in their master's absence are Carbonari. Our enemies will not look for you there, and I am certain that our treasure will be well guarded if you are there to superintend its custodians. You will find Francesca there—"

"Francesca with me and the hope of seeing you!—for you will come, will you not? What more could I ask. I should go away almost consoled. But why do you hesitate? What do you wait for to decide?"

"I will tell you. The brother who offers us his château is suspected by some among us. He has been denounced to the high *venta*. He is accused of intending to betray us. He is suspected, indeed, because he belongs to a noble royalist family. I myself believe him to be innocent. I am a prince, yet I have always fought for liberty. But it is indispensable that his innocence should be clearly proved, and so he is to be subjected to a decisive test. If it turns against him, he will die a traitor's death; if he remains firm, the proposal made to us will be accepted. The treasure will be secretly landed on the coast and hidden in the vaults of his château. We shall even appoint him to superintend the landing of it."

"I shall see him, then?"

"Certainly. It is indispensable that he should be there to introduce you to the other brethren. But you will not feel any repugnance on meeting him, for I bear him real friendship which to-night's test will only increase, I feel sure; and besides, you yourself have often seen him. You spoke to him to-night. It is the Viscount de Brouage."

"Fabien!" exclaimed Cecilia. "You allude to Fabien—the Viscount de Brouage."

"Yes. Are you surprised?"

"I—I did not suppose that he would be intrusted with anything so serious."

"Why not? isn't he one of the most zealous and devoted of our brethren? I don't believe in the charges brought against him. Since I have been struggling for my country's independence, I have learned to know men. Brouage is an enthusiast, a madman, if you like, but no traitor!"

"Traitor! oh no!"

"Some of our brethren accuse him of being an inveterate gambler, and

of being in love. They say that he would betray us for gold or woman. They are mistaken. I have watched him. It is not cupidity that makes him gamble, it is the pleasure of struggling with fortune and the love of excitement, and if I am not mistaken, although he is in love, he loves without hope. Do you not agree with me?"

"Those who accuse him slander him unmercifully," replied Cecilia, showing great emotion.

"Besides," said the prince, "he will undoubtedly justify himself, and in the clearest manner. This morning, by ten, I shall know the result of the test which he is now undergoing. If he is alive, his innocence will be proved, and he will start for Brouage at noon."

"Brouage?" repeated the young woman, with surprise.

"Yes; that is the name of the ruined *château* upon the seashore which belongs to him. It is near a village of the same name. The old castle is no longer habitable, but it is quite the place for us to deposit our treasures, and there is a farm connected with it which also belongs to the viscount. You and Francesca can live at the farmer's house; he is one of us. M. de Brouage will be there to receive you, and you may be sure that he will spare nothing to prevent you from suffering in exile, a short exile, as I am sure it will be."

Cecilia turned pale, and hung her head to conceal her pallor.

"So console yourself," added Orso, "for you will thus be spared the fogs of England. A lonely ruin will hardly bear comparison with this blessed spot which has sheltered our love; but no matter. I shall soon be able to escape, and pass a few hours with you. What does it matter if the walls are bare instead of being covered with silken hangings. Shall I not be as happy at your feet upon the flagstones as upon a Persian carpet? We did not love one another the less because we had to live in a bivouac among the Abruzzi mountains, did we?"

"No," stammered the young woman, bursting into tears, "no, Orso, I do not need the luxury which surrounds us to make me love you, and I should be happy in a desert with you. But you will not always be there, and—"

Orso looked at her, and slowly said: "This is strange! You approved of my plan but a moment ago; you even rejoiced at an arrangement which admitted of your remaining in France, and allowed us to hope that we might see one another sometimes, and yet now you are in tears! Why do you weep?" Cecilia did not reply. She let her head fall upon the shoulder of the exile, and began to sob bitterly. "What ails you, Cecilia?" asked Orso; "what is going on in your mind? You alarm me? Do you fear that I am deceiving you—that I mean to part from you?"

"No; oh, no!"

"Or are you afraid of living alone, in a distant place?"

"No, it is not loneliness that I dread. Last year, when the Austrians were tracking us like wild beasts, I wandered alone about the mountains for three days and nights. I did not tremble then."

"But you tremble now. Why do you tremble? Ah! you are hiding some secret from me," exclaimed the prince, rising.

"A secret? I have no secret to hide from you, Orso."

"Speak, then; speak!"

"I am afraid—of that young man," replied Cecilia, so low that Orso could scarcely hear her.

"Why? Do you believe the Viscount de Brouage to be a traitor? You said the reverse just now."

There came a pause. Cecilia was breathing quick, and hesitated to speak. Orso frowned, and tried to read her face. "Are you afraid that Brouage will pursue you with his attentions, and venture to make love to you? I have guessed correctly, then? This is the great mystery that oppresses you. You should have told me at once; you would have spared me a deal of painful emotion, and you would not have offended me. You are wrong in being alarmed. The viscount is a gentleman, incapable of taking advantage of such a situation as you will be placed in. If I thought that he was like the coxcombs who have annoyed you, I would not send you to Brouage. You have really grown very timid all at once," the prince added, smiling. "Haven't you a thousand times met young gallants in Francesca's rooms? Well, supposing that Monsieur de Brouage should be so wanting in honour as to court a woman placed under his care by one of the brethren, can you not keep him at a distance? Would you not know how to defend yourself?"

Cecilia wiped away a tear, and looking the prince full in the face, she said, with an effort: "Listen to me, Orso. You remember that in the carriage which brought us here just now you said, 'If I were jealous, it would be of a man who loved you as Italians love, for I might then fear that he would make you share the passion which you inspired.'"

"Yes. I remember; but what of that?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Cecilia, "a woman would already have understood, if her lover spoke to her as I have spoken to you."

"What!" exclaimed the prince, who had turned very pale, "does Brouage—"

"He loves me," said the young woman, in a low tone.

"And he has dared to tell you so?"

"He was telling me so not two hours ago. When you came into the boudoir he was entreating me to listen to him."

"Then I will kill him," said Orso. He rose as he spoke, and stood with his eyes sparkling and his arms crossed upon his chest. He added, coldly: "Why did you hide from me that he loved you?"

"Because I knew that if I told you, you would kill him."

"And you did not wish him to die? You love him, then?"

"If I loved him I should have been silent to the end. If I loved him, I should go to the farm where you wish to send me, and where I should find him."

"Madman, that I am!—fool and madman, to have believed that a gentleman would not betray a friend's confidence! And I was about to place you in the scoundrel's power."

"Do not blush for your folly, Orso. You were mistaken because you yourself are noble and sincere, and have faith in me. You men do not love as we women do. Your hearts guess nothing. Suspicion is a weakness, and only women suspect."

"Enough!" said the prince, impatiently. "I admit that you have not encouraged this Frenchman's insolent courtship; but it is too much to have even listened to him. What did you say to repel him?"

"Everything, Orso. I swore to him that I adored you, and would never be another's."

"But he persisted?"

"He loves me, I tell you, and loves me passionately. He offered to

sacrifice his life for me. He loves me so much that last night, when I heard of Count Henri's tragic death, I trembled at the thought that he, the viscount, might have killed him through jealousy. I had forgotten that he did not leave Francesca's rooms all night."

"He will try to murder me, perhaps. You see that I must settle matters with this gentleman."

"He will not attempt anything against you, Orso; for he knows that if you died, I should die also. Besides, he is so devoted to our cause, that he considers the head of the Carbonari sacred."

"Then what does he hope for?"

"He hopes that a day will come when you will cease to love me, and will abandon me to devote yourself entirely to the great work which you have undertaken."

"And which he would abandon, if you consented to elope with him."

"No; he does not think of flying with me. He wishes to marry me."

"Marry you! Then he does not know that you are my wife?"

"No; he believes that we are not married: and yet he thinks me worthy of bearing his name! You see that I am right in fearing his love, for it is deep and true."

"And you doubtless fear that you may love him in return," said Orso, bitterly.

"Yes, I fear that so much love may move me. But I swear to you, and my frankness proves it, that I love you and you only. What I fear is being carried away unawares. I am but a woman, and I need to be protected from myself. I need to feel your heart beating beside my own. You do not understand all this because you are strong, but you can at least believe me and protect me by keeping me with you."

"It is more than ever impossible. You will not go to Brouage, but you must start to-night for London."

"No, Orso, I entreat you, do not exile me! It would kill me! I will bear anything if you but breathe the same air as myself, even though I may not be able to see you. Here, at least, I shall know that you are alive, that you have not fallen into the hands of our enemies; and if any misfortune happened to you, if the conspiracy should be discovered, I could give myself up to the police and share your fate, for I would never survive you. But in England, I should know nothing."

"True. If I killed Monsieur de Brouage, you might not hear of it. Be easy, Cecilia, I will not kill that man. If, as I believe, it is proved to-night that he has not been unfaithful to us, the services he can render to the brethren are too great for me to kill him. We shall continue to fight side by side, since we both serve the cause of liberty. Later on, however, when the battle is won, I shall demand satisfaction for this insult, and he shall pay dearly for it. But as long as we struggle together for the freedom of his country, and mine, you need not fear that I shall molest him. He shall not even know that you have confessed to me that he loves you."

"You are cruel, Orso," murmured Cecilia, "cruel and unjust, for if you had not bade me assume the name of Stella Negroni I should never have met the Viscount de Brouage. Question your own heart, and you will admit that you have sacrificed me to Italy. Oh! I do not complain," she added, in reply to an impatient gesture on the part of Orso. "I have long resigned myself to suffer for our country's sake. But you have exposed me to a danger that you did not foresee. You thought that I should merely

have so many coxcombs to resist, and you did not dream that a real passion would present itself."

"Yes, I was wrong," replied Orso, with a gloomy air. "I ought to have known that you were too beautiful to inspire merely a whim."

"I wish to Heaven that I were ugly! I curse that fatal beauty which I was so proud of because it had won me your love!"

"You curse it," said the prince in a sarcastic tone, "but if Heaven heard your prayer, you would not be very grateful."

"No, for you would no longer love me. But if I were sure of preserving your affection, I would bless Providence for sending me some illness that would disfigure me. Why shouldn't I be glad? I should then be free from all the courting that has caused me so much suffering, and I could remain with you, for, were my face disfigured, no one would recognize Stella Negroni."

Orso started and looked keenly at Cecilia. "That would be paying a high price for the happiness of remaining in Paris," he said.

"You still doubt me!" exclaimed the young woman. "You won't believe that I would willingly sacrifice my beauty for the sake of being with you? Well, then, put me to the proof. Draw your stiletto and deface my countenance! Mark it as your tenants mark their cattle in the Maremma. No, that would not suffice, I should be recognized despite the scars that the steel would make; but don't you know of some burning lotion, some poisonous water, that would make me hideous? If you do, use it, Orso, and when I have become an object of horror, I shall still fall at your feet and say: 'Do not repulse me! If you cannot still love me, at least allow me to adore you.'"

"Be silent!" exclaimed Orso, "do not urge me to commit a crime."

"A crime! You fear to commit a crime by disfiguring me? I am yours. You may take my beauty as well as my life. I have offered you my life a hundred times. It belongs to you. I have nothing more to offer except my beauty."

"If I took that," replied Orso, "and if I took advantage of the state of excitement in which you now are, I should blush for myself, for I should be unworthy of your affection."

"Ah! you believe me then, at last! But no, you still doubt me. I see it in your eyes. Well then, if you love me, if you have ever loved me, in the name of the vows which we first exchanged through the bars of the convent window at Lanziano, save me from myself, deliver me from the beauty I curse, make me a monster, so that every one in the world may loathe Cecilia d'Ascoli, every one but you; for you would not drive me away—I know your heart, Orso—you would pity me and still allow me to love you."

"If I accepted the sacrifice of your beauty, Cecilia, I should not feel pity for you, but the wildest, the deepest love."

"And you hesitate to accept it? Ah! I plainly see that you fancy I am but yielding to a passionate impulse. You are wrong, Orso, you do not yet know me. I am calm and I am ready. I know that you would not have the cruelty to cut my face with a dagger. And yet it would have been sweet to be wounded by your hand; I should not utter a single cry. But I do not ask for so much courage on your part. I only ask for a poison that will destroy my features without killing me. Such a poisonous lotion must exist. It does exist. At Lanziano when I was a girl I once saw a man whom his mistress had disfigured by applying a mask to his face while he was asleep."

"Yes, such a poisonous lotion exists, and I am perhaps the only man in France who has it in his possession," replied Orso, looking fixedly at the young woman, who did not flinch.

"You have it with you?" she exclaimed.

"I have it with me. I always carry it about me in order to avert recognition in case I were ever forced to fly from the police."

"Give it to me!" exclaimed Cecilia, holding out her hand.

So much simplicity in heroism greatly affected the conspirator, although he had so often braved the scaffold and the cannon. He drew the young woman to him, and, after softly kissing her brow, replied: "No, Cecilia, it is impossible."

"Listen," she replied in a clear voice, "I can understand your refusal. You fear that I shall regret my act and die of shame and grief when I see myself disfigured. That would be but natural. I am a woman and have all a woman's weakness. But I will free you from your scruples. I will never look at my own face again."

"What do you mean?"

"You must swear to me that you will allow me to wear a mask, a mask which I will only remove in the darkness. When I look at myself in a mirror it will seem to me as if I am at the Opera ball where you once took me," added Cecilia, with a sad smile. "You remember that no one recognised me, although I spoke to several men who frequented Francesca's rooms?"

"A mask?" repeated the prince. "Would you consent to live with a mask over your face?"

"Would I consent! I beg you as a favour to allow me that consolation. It may be cowardly, but I should not have the courage to look at myself. Besides," she added approaching so close to Orso that her lips almost touched his—"besides, let me tell you everything; I renounce my beauty, but I do not renounce you, and if you saw me, Orso, generous though you are, you would not, could not love me. Do not take away my last illusion, my last hope, perhaps. Do not forbid me to hope that my vanished face would live in your memory, and that at night time, you would still dream of the Cecilia whom you idolised when she was still beautiful. Listen once more! This is not the first time that I have thought of this plan for inspiring everlasting love. I have often said to myself that I should grow old, that time would change my face, and that the day would come when you would say that I had become plain. You, Orso, will always be young. Men like you do not alter. Their faces reflect their souls. Winters pass over their heads without effecting any change in them. But we poor women are but a breath of God's will, like the roses, and like them we wither. A wrinkle takes away a year of our life, for our life is love, and you cannot love us when we are ugly. It is the law of the world that perishable beings can only love perishable things. Do not attempt to deny this, Orso. You would be telling a falsehood," said Cecilia, closing his lips with a kiss.

And she resumed, speaking in a still lower tone, and as though she feared making the confession which was on her tongue: "Do you know that I really hoped to inspire eternal love, and how I hoped to effect it? I scarcely dare to tell you; but you know what it is to love wildly, and you will forgive me. I prayed to the Madonna to put out your eyes, those eyes which burn my heart when they gaze at me. I was mad and guilty in wishing such a thing, but as Heaven suggests to you a means of attaining

the aim I dreamed of, do not hesitate, Orso, do not hesitate, I entreat you! You will not be blind, and yet you will not see my face; you will be unable to follow the slow progress of destructive change. What does it matter whether my beauty fades away little by little, like the golden glow of the sun-set, or vanishes like a flash of lightning, which has shone out but for an instant in the night? What can it matter if you do not see that I have become repulsive? Where is the lotion, Orso? Why don't you give it to me?"

"It is here," replied the prince, taking a dagger from his breast.

"Ah! then you consent to disfigure me yourself!" exclaimed Cecilia.

"Thanks, Orso. I am here; do not delay."

The exile pressed a spring in the handle of the stiletto, which opened like a case. "You see these two vials," he said. "One of them contains a poison that kills instantly. A single drop of it placed upon my lips, or introduced into my blood by a prick of this coral pin, which is a signal to our brethren, would kill me instantly. The other vial contains a lotion which disorganises the skin and covers it permanently with a livid tinge. Its action is painless, but sure and rapid. A bit of linen dipped into this water and applied to the face does the work, and the hideous traces never disappear."

"And if any man saw my face afterwards he would not know me, even though he might once have loved me?"

"I don't believe it would be possible, but it would be imprudent to make the trial," replied Orso at once.

"Don't be afraid," resumed Cecilia. "I do not think of doing so. I am about to die in the eyes of every one else, those of Fabien de Brouage especially, and to live for you alone. For we need not part now. I shall be masked. I can remain in Paris and create a new life for myself. Who will ever guess that this mask hides the face of the so-called Stella Negroni?"

"You forget, Cecilia, that the French police are inquisitive, and will wish to know who you are and why you wear a mask."

"Well, then, I will reply by the truth. I will say that I am hideous and that I do not wish to be seen, and if I am forced to remove my mask in presence of a physician, he will be able to state that what I say is true."

"A physician?" repeated Orso, "yes, you may be forced to show your face to one. And such a test would remove all suspicion, especially if the doctor were a Carbonaro. We have brethren everywhere, even among the police, and one of them is a doctor in the employment of the Prefecture of Police, and if he should be sent to look at you, Stella, we should have nothing to fear. I will, if necessary, confide my secret to him, but none of the other brethren will know what has become of Stella Negroni, not one, remember!"

"I hear you and I thank you, Orso. The man who presumed to love me will forget me. I only ask to keep Teresa near me, and to see Francesca before she goes away, for she will go away, will she not?"

"Yes, to-night. But you must not see her. She is devoted, but still I sha'n't let her know that you will remain in Paris, for she might involuntarily betray the fact, and an imprudence on her part would cost us our happiness. I shall send her to Brouage. She will find the viscount there. She must tell him that you have gone to England."

"That will be best," said Cecilia, without any hesitation.

"Teresa shall remain with you, and Gennaro, who has attended you here, shall stay as well. No one knows either of them. Both are sufficiently

intelligent, and speak French well enough to deceive any one as to their origin. They will go with you in a post-chaise to the hotel where you must put up, for it must seem as if you were arriving from the country or some foreign land. I have not yet made up my mind as to your new residence, but I will arrange everything. Time must be considered. If the masked woman comes to Paris directly after the Baroness de Casanova and her niece disappear, the police will suspect something. In a month, however, no one will give a thought to the fugitives. Have you the courage to remain here for a month without seeing me?"

"Without seeing you?" exclaimed the young woman, in a tone of grief.

"You will not see me until all Paris knows you as the masked woman, for you must go about everywhere; the frivolous, gossiping Parisians will surely give you a nickname and concoct some story about you. You might even receive some inquisitive people. I will find a pretext for it. I will arrange a plan of life for you, and with the power and the resources at my command, I will make it such as you can endure."

"And when the stir is over, and the spies have relaxed in their watchfulness, I shall see you, shall I not?"

"I will come as I came here, Cecilia, every night."

"Ah! I am too happy!" cried the young woman, clutching the dagger which the prince was holding carelessly in his hand. He attempted to regain it, but she drew swiftly away from him.

"It is the white vial," said she. "A few drops of the lotion will rid me of my fatal beauty. When day dawns I shall no longer exist for any one but you."

"Cecilia!" cried Orso, "give me back the vial! I forbid your using it. I wished to try you, but I will not accept this horrible sacrifice."

"I have resolved to make it. Do not attempt to deter me!" And as he went towards her, Cecilia added in an excited tone: "If you come one step nearer, I will kill myself before your eyes! Death is here in the blue vial. If you won't accept my beauty, I will give you my life. Choose!"

Orso turned pale and stopped short. He realised that if he went forward, Cecilia would swallow the poison which would kill her at once.

She thanked him with a gesture and then, calm and almost smiling, she took the white vial, uncorked it, poured part of its contents upon a handkerchief, and approached a cheval glass. "I wish to see myself once more," she said; and her voice was as sweet as celestial music. "I am beautiful, it is true. Look well at me, Orso. May my image for ever be engraved upon your heart!"

"Cecilia, in the name of our love do not destroy the work of Heaven!"

"Heaven only punishes suicide, and I will not touch the blue vial unless you attempt to stop my hand." And, taking the handkerchief, she raised it towards her face, saying:

"You said that it would not be painful; but that the effect would be rapid. I shall not see it. Darkness first, and then a mask. How shall I apply it? It will suffice, won't it, to touch my face with it? I will pass the handkerchief over my brow and cheeks, but I shall spare my eyes, for with them I shall be able to see your dear face, and that will be my happiness. But I must make haste. Farewell, fatal beauty, farewell!" And then, having blown out the candles burning upon the mantel-shelf, "Now I am yours, Orso," she murmured, "yours alone, if you still have the courage to love me."

V

WHEN Fabien de Brouage left the president of the Coral Pin Association and Stella Negroni in the boudoir at the baroness's, he went back to the dice-table but did not sit down. Only those who lose care to stick to a game, and the viscount had realised a handsome sum. Besides, although he played excitedly, he did not go every evening to Madame de Casanova's for the mere sake of play. He was attracted there more especially by Stella's beauty and by political reasons. That night, although lucky with the dice, he had not been so with the fair Italian, who persisted in repelling him, and had spoken in a way as to discourage him altogether. He had, besides, learned very serious news. He had heard that a spy had smuggled himself in among the usual guests, that an alarm had been given as to the conspiracy, and also that his cousin, Henri de Brouage, had been mysteriously killed the night before.

It must be said to Fabien's praise that he had been more moved by this tragic event than by any thought of the danger which threatened the secret society to which he belonged. He had not, however, been on a footing of intimacy with Henri; being merely bound to him by a tie of relationship to which he paid little heed. Everything tended to separate him from his cousin, social situation, disposition, and political opinions. The marquis's son, the brilliant officer destined to inherit a peerage, felt contempt and dislike for Fabien who had refused to serve the king, and who spent his time among liberals or even worse folks. Thus Henri had not hesitated to court Stella, although he had seen that Fabien was desperately in love with her. Such being the case, Fabien had no reason to regret his cousin's death, and even might have felt relief at being rid of a rival.

However, he knew that his brother René was intimate with Henri, and he loved his brother, although he did not agree with him in many things. René had the opinions of a nobleman, of a man belonging to a family which had ever been faithful to the monarchy, and to the Catholic religion. He did not discuss these opinions of his. They had been transmitted to him with the blood in his veins, by his father a soldier of La Vendée, and by his mother, a woman of a noble family, which had been ruined in defending the Jacobite cause.

Fabien, on the contrary, had very early disputed the views which the Jesuit Fathers of Dublin College had tried to inculcate in his mind. The viscount was, indeed, a rebel from the outset. Oppression exasperated him, and authority was odious to his feelings. As a school-boy, he had braved his masters, and now he braved the government. However, the revolutionary tendencies which fermented within him might have subsided if, after being expelled by the Jesuit fathers, he had not unfortunately met in London an old member of the French Convention, whom the Eighteenth Brumaire had forced to fly to England. This man was not a violent intriguer or a bloody fanatic like so many of his companions. He was quite sincere in his views, a true Republican apostle, and always ready to suffer and die, if need be, for the sacred though uncertain cause of humanity. He belonged to the little sect headed by Chaumette, Anacharsis Clootz, and a few other mild revolutionists whom Maximilien Robespierre sent to the scaffold a few days after guillotining Danton. His obscurity had then protected him, and somewhat later on he had espoused the levelling doctrines

of Gracchus Babeuf; and these he advocated on the English side of the Channel, while professing to teach mathematics.

He thus taught Fabien de Brouage geometry and algebra, but he also taught him the hollow theories set forth by Rousseau in "Emile" and the "Contrat Social." He found in his pupil's excitable mind, a fit soil for the fatal seed which he sowed therein. And when the fall of the Empire gave Fabien a country once more, the young viscount thought of nothing but radical reforms of equalising and levelling, universal brotherhood, and such Utopian affairs.

The welcome given him in France did not change his views or damp his enthusiasm. He had learned to detest the Emperor, whom he believed had been a tyrant, and he began to hate the Bourbons with the same intensity, although they had accepted a really liberal charter. His uncle had fought for Napoleon, and now served Louis XVIII; and in Fabien's eyes, the marquis was but a hireling full of ambition. In fact, this near relative, a protector provided by nature, filled him with invincible aversion. He even left his house, and would have refused to accept any favour from him, if he had not feared to injure his brother.

He loved his brother René, although he resembled him so little, and was really indebted to him for being able to live in Paris as he pleased, free from all ties and unhampered. René contented himself with the very trifling income which his position at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs procured him. He allowed Fabien to be the absolute master of their estate at Brouage, and—a still more meritorious sacrifice—suffered him to retain all the money that the land brought in. The viscount had placed his own men there as farmers, and whenever he had got into debt by gambling, it was only for form's sake that he even asked his brother's permission to sell a field or two.

During the first five years of the Restoration, the two brothers had lived in close companionship in spite of the difference of their ideas; but, after February 1820, they almost ceased to meet. The murder of the Duke de Berry had revived political hatred, and the object of the revolutionists was clear to everyone. René could no longer remain on the same terms with his brother whose friends openly approved of so abominable a crime. So they separated. René took rooms in the Rue d'Artois, and Fabien in the Quartier Latin, where he indulged more and more in conspiracy.

At this moment some Frenchmen had introduced Italian Carbonarism into France, and the grand master of this formidable society, Orso, Prince of Catanzaro, arrived in Paris. Fabien de Brouage was made acquainted with this noble conspirator by his former teacher, who had returned to France under a false name, and who was actively working in the shade to overthrow the monarchy; and the viscount was soon promoted to the presidency of one of the *ventas*. He had indeed become a conspicuous member of the party which had been formed by blending together the wreck of Napoleon's legions, the revolutionary phalanx and malcontents of all classes. If the soldiers of this motley army had conquered, they would have killed each other after the victory; and, indeed, its generals by no means agreed as to the final aim of the campaign which they were directing. The enthusiastic viscount wished every one to share in the benefits of equality and fraternity. The prince thought only of driving the Bourbons from the two Sicilies, in order to establish a republic in which noblemen would have their share of influence. Colonel Fournès was anxious to re-establish the Empire, and once more wave the tricolor flag from one end

of Europe to the other ; while the Republican deputies were working to transmit the privileges of the nobility to citizens of all classes.

However, chiefs and soldiers alike fully agreed as to overthrowing the Bourbon government, even though they might have to dispute for power among themselves afterward. Fabien, a noble by birth, and an aristocrat by instinct, did not feel the slightest scruple in associating with the enemies of his own caste. And, what is more, he thought it quite natural to make love, and to gamble, although dice-throwing and love-making such as his were would surely have come to an end in any such regenerated universe as that which he dreamed of.

However, on the night of Shrove Monday, when he left the baroness's rooms, the viscount cursed his existence, for he had failed to make an impression upon Stella Negroni, despite his ardent entreaties, for she had given him to understand that she did not love him, and never could or would love him. This clear refusal, couched in the plainest possible terms, had exasperated him all the more as he did not know Stella's real position or her real name. He suspected that a tender and perhaps an improper connection existed between the grandmaster of the Coral Pin Association and herself. He did not know, however, that she was his wife, or that he went to meet her every night at the little house in the Rue du Rocher.

Orso had carefully concealed this secret from all the brethren of the association, even from those who, like Fabien, held a high position among the Carbonari, and thus frequently had occasion to meet the grandmaster. So Fabien was surprised at Stella's indifference, and felt humiliated. He had imagined at first that she preferred one of the fine gentlemen who came to the baroness's, perhaps his cousin Henri, and his jealousy had almost caused a quarrel. But in time he acquired the certainty that Stella Negroni turned a cold shoulder to all her admirers without exception, at least to all her declared suitors, and he was tempted to believe that she was secretly on terms of intimacy with some one in exile.

He did not know anything of her past save what she had seen fit to tell him. He believed her to be the widow of an officer whom the Austrians had shot during the last insurrection in Italy, and he knew that, like her aunt, she served the cause of liberty in France. He was not aware, however, that her birth was good and that her life had always been irreproachable. And yet he loved her so sincerely that he wished to make her his wife, and indeed he was even more deeply in love, perhaps, than his brother René was with Octavie de Saint-Hélier. The Brouages all had a tendency to fall desperately in love and to set their affections upon the wrong person, even upon dangerous women. Now a conspirator who is in love is always exposed to great risks, and those which threatened Fabien were considerable indeed. For this reason, among others, he longed for the moment when the Carbonari would show themselves, when the conspiracy would break forth, and the revolution be effected ; he longed for the moment when the brethren of the Coral Pin Association, freed from political care, would be free to think of love alone. And he fancied that the hour of triumph was near.

"Yes," said he, as he slipped out of the room where Des Loquetières was still playing *carté*, "in a month from now our lot will be decided. The insurrection will take place on the 20th of March. The high *venta* will vote to-morrow about the landing of our treasure, and will send me to Brouage to receive it. I shall have time to go there and to return to Paris for the decisive moment. Ah ! if I can only find Stella again ! What took

place this evening will perhaps force her to go into hiding. Luigi declares that the police are watching the house. What will the grandmaster decide to do? He has told me nothing, and there are moments when I am inclined to think that Don Hernandez mistrusts me. Has he seen that I love Stella? Is he jealous of her? I will find out, and I will also find out all about Henri's death. That Italianized Spaniard is capable of having had him murdered. I must go to-morrow to see my brother," concluded the viscount, as he reached the house door. "He won't give me a very cordial welcome, but he will tell me what he knows, and there is a rumour that he is mixed up in this matter in some way or other." Thereupon Fabien went out into the street.

He resided in the Rue de Vaugirard, at a few steps from the Luxembourg; and the distance being slight he decided to walk home. He was occupied with his thoughts, and did not at first perceive that it was raining; but at a hundred yards or so from the baroness's he suddenly slipped upon the wet pavement, and saw that sleet was falling, and that it was so muddy that his boots sank in the ground. He was about to turn back to engage one of the hackney coaches which stood before the baroness's door, when a driver hailed him from his box.

This coachman had seen him leave the house, and, no doubt, thinking him a likely customer, had followed him with his vehicle. He was driving one of those huge hackney coaches, which were so common at that time, and looked like gala carriages. Six persons could sit in them at ease. Fabien made a sign to the man, who eagerly stopped his horses, whereupon the viscount gave him his address, opened the door and sprang into the coach. Scarcely had the door closed, however, than eight strong hands seized him by the neck, the arms, and the waist.

"Wretches!" cried Fabien, struggling desperately.

"If you make a disturbance, we shall be forced to gag you," said a deep voice.

"Gag me, if you can!" howled the viscount. "Kill me, if you like. You shall not conquer me!"

He made herculean efforts to free himself, but he had to deal with four men of uncommon vigour, and did not succeed in his purpose. After a few moments' struggling, which he could no longer keep up, he found that a rope was being passed round his arms and waist. His exasperation knew no bounds, and not being able to move, he began to call out.

"Don't you see that shouting is useless?" resumed the voice. "The coach has wooden shutters which are up and it is going at full speed. Just now, the drivers near the door of the house might have heard you, but now we are far from the Rue de Monsieur, and we are going fast; and the passers-by, if even we meet any, won't spring to the horses' heads to deliver you. They would be knocked down, besides finding themselves in a pretty pickle if they made the attempt. You see that you had better keep quiet."

Fabien was obliged to admit that the advice was good, or, at least, that he was compelled to comply with it. He had been tied in an instant, and in such a way that he could not move his arms. He could, of course, kick those who held him, but he would thus expose himself to humiliating reprisals, and so he kept still.

He was suffocating with rage and incapable of reasoning as to the strange mishap which had befallen him. It was quite dark in the prison on wheels which he had so hastily entered. The shutters did not admit a ray of light.

He found that he was on the back seat between two men who sat close beside him. The two others were in front, and their knees were pressed against his own. And since the remonstrances addressed to him, not one of the fellows had said a word.

The coach, drawn along by two good horses, made frightful bounds over the bad pavement, which Paris then rejoiced in, and the inmates were terribly shaken. However, after ten minutes' raging, Fabien succeeded in becoming calmer, and at once tried to understand his situation.

Why had he been arrested thus, and into whose hands had he fallen? In trying to find an answer to these questions, the first idea that occurred to him was that everything must have been prepared beforehand. The coach had evidently been stationed at the door of the baroness's house, and the driver had followed him slowly, being certain that the bad weather would force him to take a vehicle. Who had hired the coach for this purpose? Fabien could not conjecture.

"The police would not behave like this," said he to himself. "They would have surrounded Madame de Casanova's house, and have arrested everybody in it. Hernandez believes that we have been betrayed, and he was expecting a search. He was right, perhaps, but if it takes place, why am I arrested before the rest and alone?"

The viscount concluded from this reasoning that he didn't have to deal with the police, and that he was purely and simply a victim to some private revenge.

"It is some rival who has caused my arrest," he thought. "He has been spying upon me since I began to talk to Stella, and, who knows? he was perhaps hidden somewhere in the place, for the house is full of secret staircases and passages. He must have heard my impassioned words, and prepared this ambush in consequence. What does he intend to do with me? He means to kill me, of course. And yet, if such be his purpose, why am I still alive? These bullies who are holding me would already have stabbed or strangled me. After killing me, they need only open the door of the coach and throw me out upon the pavement; to-morrow, my body would be found in the street, and that is all there would be of it, for no one would know how I died."

Fabien then came to the conclusion that his rival meant to carry him off to some lonely spot where he was waiting for him to force him to fight a duel.

"There are four of them in this coach," thought he, "just the right number of seconds. They wish to give the business an appearance of regularity, just as in the affair in which Henri fell; and, now that I think of it, Luigi said in my presence that my cousin came yesterday to the door of the house, and that he was there met by a man who went away with him. They are doing with me to-night the same as they did last night with him. Well, we shall see! I shall not let myself be killed so easily; I know how to use a sword, and if I only have to defend myself against one adversary, I— But why shouldn't I make these rascals tell me the truth? They can have no motive for concealing it, now that they know that I cannot escape them." And, thereupon, in a quiet voice, he said aloud: "I give up resisting."

"You are right," replied the man on his right. "By resisting you only make matters nasty for yourself."

"I don't wish to do that. Where are you taking me?"

"You must know."

"I don't."

"I'm sorry then, but we must not tell you."

"I shall know sooner or later."

"Very soon ; in half an hour, or forty minutes at the most, we shall be there."

"Upon the duelling-ground?"

The man, this time, did not reply, but his silence caused Fabien fresh anxiety. A new idea suddenly entered his mind. He thought that the men he had to deal with were mere robbers, and did not reflect that thieves do not set about plundering a man in any such way as this.

"Good!" said he; "I have guessed everything. You know that I have won some money at Madame de Casanova's gambling-tables, and you think that I ought not to retain my winnings. Well, I don't care to do so. I have from four to five hundred louis about me, in gold and bank-notes. What is the use of taking me out of my way to steal the money from me? Take it at once. It is in my left-hand pocket. Take it, and let me go. I give you my word of honour that I won't make any complaint to the police to-morrow."

"I believe that," said one of the men, with a loud laugh; "the police are no friends of yours."

This reply startled Fabien, and proved to him that he was taking useless trouble.

"Aha!" continued the fellow on the right, "so you take us for robbers, do you? This is the first time that it ever happened. It is true that there is no light."

And he said to one of the men on the front seat: "Gervais, my lad, you have a match; light up! The gentleman will see at once that we are respectable men."

Fabien was more and more surprised, and anxiously waited for the light. Presently, by the bluish gleam of a sulphur match, which one of the men had dipped in a little bottle filled with phosphorescent paste—the Fumadé briquets were then in use, and were inclosed in a red box—the prisoner caught sight of a brass sword-hilt. And the bearer of the sword having drawn from his pocket and lighted a coil of waxen taper, vulgarly called "a cellar rat," four soldiers appeared to the viscount's astonished eyes, four men of the Paris Gendarmerie, a special corps then under the orders of the Prefect of Police. One of them, the man on the right, wore a corporal's uniform.

"Well, sir," he said to Fabien, "are you still afraid that we want your money?"

The viscount could not now seek any such reasons, and his conjectures fell to the ground. He was purely and simply arrested by order of the government. The men who had captured him were in uniform, and had the usual faces of gendarmes—quiet, placid, and indifferent. The corporal, however, looked more intelligent than his companions, and seemed somewhat inclined to laugh.

"I see very well what you are," said the viscount, "but I don't understand what you are doing."

"It is very simple. We are going with you to prevent you from escaping," replied the corporal.

"Very good; but why have you arrested me?"

"Because I was ordered to do so."

"By whom?"

"By my colonel, Baron Tassin, and by written order. Do you wish to see it? Here it is, signed by the colonel, and countersigned, Leymarie, adjutant-mayor."

As the corporal spoke he displayed before the prisoner's eyes a printed formula, bearing Fabien's christian name and surname in writing. The viscount happened to know that the commanding officer of the six companies of the Paris gendarmerie was in fact Baron Tassin, whose signature was upon the document. If he had retained any doubt, the production of this paper would have removed it, but he had none.

"So be it!" said he; "you have the order, and had you shown it to me before, I should have followed you quietly. But you have a strange way of arresting people, and I assure you that I shall say so to your colonel, for I presume that you are taking me to him at the Hôtel Lamoignon, on the Quai de l'Horloge."

"You will soon see," replied the corporal, with a cunning air. "And as for our way of acting, I was instructed to avoid all disturbance in the street. You say that you would have come with me quietly, but how do I know that? for when a man doesn't expect to be arrested, and is taken by the collar at the door of a house where he has been amusing himself all the evening, it puts him into the deuce of a rage; he resists, and a crowd gathers, whereas, by proceeding quietly, all that is avoided, and I did so for your own sake."

"I am really very much obliged to you," said Fabien, in a sarcastic tone. "Is it in my interest that you have tied me up as though I were sentenced to death?"

"As soon as we arrive you will be unbound, in conformity to the law."

These last words surprised the viscount, but he did not ask for an explanation, being well aware that the gendarme would not reply. "One word more," said he. "I am not a soldier. Why have I been arrested by soldiers?"

"I don't know. You ask me too much. I merely obey the orders I receive." And after this curt reply, the corporal said to his assistant: "Blow out your light, Gervais. We cannot be far from the place now, and we do not require a light to get out."

Fabien said no more. He contented himself with thinking, and his thoughts were far from pleasant.

"I have been caught," thought he, "in a trap which I might easily have avoided. Where are they taking me? To prison, that's clear. But why am I arrested alone? But now I think of it, the police may have gone into the house and arrested everybody there without my knowledge? No, that is impossible! There were several royalist officers there. The police did not wish to make a disturbance. I only hope that Stella succeeded in getting away."

Suddenly, a new idea flashed through his mind: "I have it!" said he to himself. "I have been denounced as having killed my cousin Henri in a duel. It has been reported that we were both in love with the same woman and that we were not friends. Ah! if that is the trouble, I shall have no difficulty in justifying myself."

"We have arrived, sir," now said the corporal.

The vehicle had been rumbling along with a peculiar dull sound during the last few moments.

"I fancy that we have been going over a drawbridge," thought Fabien, "and that we are now passing under an arch."

The coach suddenly stopped, and the prisoner, who was attentive to every sound, heard some guns striking the pavement. Then a hoarse voice called out: "Carry arms!"

"I am beginning to think that they have taken me to Vincennes," said Fabien to himself. "It is more and more incomprehensible."

Meantime, the door of the coach had been opened from outside. A man appeared wearing the uniform of an adjutant and carrying a lantern. "Bring out the prisoner," said he.

The corporal, aided by the gendarme on the left, quickly unfastened the rope which held the viscount's arms. "You see that I didn't lie," he growled while doing so. "You are free now and unbound."

Then alighting from the coach, he helped the viscount out. It was indeed under an arch that the vehicle had stopped, a somewhat high vault, badly lit by two lanterns suspended from the walls. A picket of infantry was ranged in line beneath it, and Fabien saw that the men's shakos bore the number of the regiment, the 45th of the Line. This regiment, which had recently arrived in Paris to form part of the garrison there, was one of those in which the Carbonari had the most supporters; but its fidelity was not suspected, and its colonel, M. de Toustain du Manoir, was a staunch royalist, and, like his officers, he did not have any dealings with the liberal party.

"Follow me!" said the adjutant.

A narrow passage ran along under the vault, and Fabien, led by the corporal, and with three gendarmes behind him, went down it, following the officer bearing the lantern. The soldiers who were grouped on each side of the entrance now formed a file of four and closed up the march. The passage led to a door which was opened as soon as the adjutant knocked, and the viscount was then gently pushed into a long room, at one end of which there was a platform, while at the other wooden benches were ranged in amphitheatre fashion. The platform and the benches were unoccupied. But on the platform there was a horse-shoe table and five arm-chairs. A lamp suspended from the ceiling and four candles placed upon the table dimly lighted this vast and lofty room.

The corporal set a chair at the foot of the platform and signed to the prisoner to sit down. The soldiers of the escort came in and ranged themselves along the wall, and the door was then closed again, the adjutant placing himself in front of it.

Fabien felt as though he were dreaming. "I am before a tribunal," he thought. "But what tribunal is it, and how is it that I am to be tried without first being examined?"

The people around him did not seem inclined to enlighten him, and he abstained from questioning them. He sat down upon the chair and waited. Not for long, however. A door suddenly opened in front of him. The officer commanding the troops called out: "Present arms!" And then five officers in full uniform entered, and advanced towards the platform, seating themselves in the five arm-chairs set ready for them. It was evident that these were five judges, or, rather, four assessors and a president, for the seat in the middle was somewhat higher than the others. The officer who occupied it wore the uniform and epaulets of a colonel of gendarmerie. On his right was a major of mounted chasseurs and a captain of cuirassiers; on the left two captains of infantry. All wore the high collar, had a sword at their side, and the cross of Saint-Louis upon their breast.

The viscount understood less and less. He did not belong to the army,

and could not, therefore, be legally tried by a court-martial. And yet it was evidently a court-martial before which he had been brought. The *Cours prévôtales*, instituted in 1815, had been composed of a military president and civil assessors. But they had ceased to exist after the 1st of January, 1818. Fabien was aware of this, and so he vainly endeavoured to explain by what illegal process he had been dragged before a court that he could not rightfully be tried by. That he had been arrested as a conspirator he no longer doubted, and he made up his mind to defend himself energetically.

But he felt despondent as to the result of this strange adventure. The violent manner in which he had been arrested, the suppression of proper formalities, the hour, the absence of the public from the hall, everything, indeed, made him fear that he had an exceptional court before his eyes, made up for the occasion, to try him in a summary manner.

"Hernandez was right. We have been betrayed," he thought. "By this time, all the leaders of the Carbonari must be arrested, and Stella also, perhaps."

"Prisoner, stand up!" said the colonel-president in a rough tone.

The viscount rose and said, crossing his arms: "Of what am I accused?"

"Of plotting against the safety of the state, and of premeditated murder."

This last assertion made Fabien start, but he did not lose his composure. "Nothing else!" he replied, in a tone of irony. "I understand that a man, accused of so many crimes, should be deprived of the protection which the law grants to most people. But before replying to the questions you are about to put to me, I wish to know why I, who am a mere civilian, and have never borne arms, am called before you gentlemen of the army?"

"You were about to take up arms against your lawful sovereign. And that is why you appear before a military commission, the decision of which is without appeal, and which the King has this day appointed, giving it discretionary authority."

"I see here neither witnesses nor a defendant. Matters were conducted like this before the revolutionary tribunals."

"Cease to deride us, and justify yourself, if you can. What is your name?"

"You know very well that it is Fabien de Brouage."

"Fabien, Viscount de Brouage," remarked the president. "Your father defended the monarchy, and died from the effects of glorious wounds received in fighting to re-establish the throne. Your uncle is a lieutenant-general and a peer of France. He is entirely devoted to the King."

"As he was to the emperor."

"I wish you to reply to me in a serious manner, and not to make matters worse, for your situation is serious enough. If I remind you of the services rendered to the royal cause by your father and uncle, it is that you may the better realise the enormity of your crime in associating with the enemies of the government of your country. It was in England, it appears, that a revolutionist named Lormier, a regicide of the worst kind, inculcated the detestable opinions you hold and openly profess in contempt for the loyalty which has always existed in your family."

"I do not deny that," replied Fabien, without any hesitation. "Liberty of thought has not been suppressed. I have a right to think differently to my ancestors and relatives."

"You prefer to think like a scoundrel; and you, no doubt, still associate with this terrorist, soiled by every crime, for we know that he has returned to France under a false name."

"You know more than I do, then. I am utterly ignorant of his whereabouts, not having seen or heard from him for six years."

"Very well. You do not wish to injure one of your accomplices. Your silence will not save him. But you stand upon the right of thought, which the King has given to all his subjects in the Charter, and you abuse that right by conspiring. You are all the more guilty, as you live on his majesty's liberality."

"I?"

"Yes, you, for you are indebted to his goodness for the restitution of an estate, the produce of which is your only resource."

"True. I had the weakness to accept that restitution. My brother is as poor as I am. I did not wish that he should lose his share of our father's property. If I had refused this liberality, as you are pleased to call an act of simple honesty, the royal generosity would not have taken effect, and my brother would have suffered by my refusal."

"It appears, however, that you spend almost all of the income derived from this property, and that you employ the money to support the King's enemies. Your brother, who relinquishes it to you, is, doubtless, unaware of the culpable use you put it to."

"My brother does not know what I do, as I have seldom seen him, especially within the last year."

"We know that; we know that Count René de Brouage does not share your treasonable opinions; but we are not busying ourselves about him."

"True, my brother is not in question, and I suppose that you will tell me why I, myself, am in question."

The president paused, as if to reflect, but Fabien realised that he was about to make a "direct thrust," as they say in fencing halls. This colonel of gendarmerie was well suited to his position, and he was, no doubt, not on a military commission for the first time. He looked surly, and he employed, with all the solemnity imaginable, the various terms of official jargon, then invented for the express use of men in office and true supporters of the Bourbons. Fabien, who was studying the colonel, said to himself that he must have been picked out with great care, and the pains taken in choosing him proved that the trial was considered an important matter.

"What was your connection," now asked the colonel, "with the unfortunate Henri de Brouage, who was murdered last night?"

"I had no connection with him. I had ceased all acquaintance with him as his views were not the same as mine on political matters, and we had even stopped speaking to one another."

In thus replying the viscount began to feel reassured as to the point which interested him the most. He said to himself that he had not been mistaken in supposing that he was suspected of having killed Count Henri: and he almost hoped that nothing more would be said about the conspiracy, and that the chiefs of the Coral Pin Association were not arrested, or Stella Negroni either.

"You met him, however," resumed the colonel, "you often met him at a suspicious place where you spent your evenings. You were leaving that house when you were arrested."

"Henri has been going there, that is true, for some time back, but I repeat that we did not even speak to one another."

"He went there last Sunday night."

"I did not see him."

"And on leaving this gambling-house he was challenged, taken to a lonely spot, and—"

"You may spare yourself the trouble of proceeding," interrupted Fabien. "I see that you suspect me of killing my cousin. The charge is so absurd that I scorn to justify myself. If you wish to find out what it amounts to, question witnesses whose sincerity you will not suspect. There were I don't know how many officers of the royal guard at Madame de Casanova's rooms last night. It is easy for you to find out their names and question them. They all know me by sight, and they will all tell you that I remained at the gaming-table till five in the morning. Besides," added the viscount, with a gesture that none of his ancestors need have disowned, "I do not know why I tell you all this. A man like myself ought not to justify himself of such an infamous charge. Do not question me as to my cousin's death. I refuse to reply."

The judges grumbled a little, but this haughty language did not appear to displease the president, who even conformed to the wish so proudly expressed by Fabien, and instead of insisting, said in a solemn tone and with a mournful air: "I hope that you are innocent of this execrable murder. The name you bear would be for ever stained were you a murderer. And it is to prevent that name from being stained, and to spare a French peer the shame of seeing his nephew in the dock, that the King, in his fatherly solicitude, ordered that you should be brought before a military commission, the decision of which would be secretly given and secretly executed. Your accomplices will be tried by the Court of Peers, but your uncle, who belongs to it, will not have the pain of excusing himself so as not to condemn you."

"My accomplices? What accomplices?" asked Fabien, who was thinking to himself. "This is why they brought no one here but me; but what have they done with my friends?"

"Your accomplices, the Carbonari," said the grave voice of the president.

"We are not in Italy," replied the viscount, shrugging his shoulders.

"No, we are in France, and the Carbonari have been introduced here by yourself and your friends. You have fifty *ventas* in Paris. Need I tell you the names of the principal ones? There is Le Bélisaire, then again La Sincère and La Réussite. Must I tell you your signal? It is a Coral Pin. You turn pale. You are beginning to believe that the conspiracy is discovered. Well, so that you may have no further doubt on the point, I will prove to you that we have some of the conspirators here. Adjutant, go and fetch three of the leaders from the prison of the fort. Bring them here."

"They have them! All is lost!" thought Fabien.

The adjutant went out to execute the colonel's order, and Fabien, stunned by the unexpected blow, sank down upon his chair.

The president observed him closely while exchanging a few words in a low tone with the officer on the right. The remaining assessors had surly faces, and looked like men who foresaw the necessity of discharging an unpleasant duty. The soldiers with their guns at rest and standing still in file, did not appear to take the slightest interest in the prisoner. The lamp

suspended from the ceiling was growing dimmer, and the great hall was filling gradually with shadows.

Fabien hung his head and closed his eyes in order to conjure up a vision of the beloved woman for whom he trembled as he thought of her. He realised that all would be over by daylight, and that he would never again behold Stella Negroni.

The door presently reopened ; bayonets glittered once more in the passage, and the adjutant reappeared, pushing in three men in civilian dress. These three men were instantly recognised by the viscount.

They were the leaders of the three *ventas* which the colonel had named a moment before.

There was an old man among them, a thorough Conventional, reminding one of Maximilian Robespierre by his face, his solemn air, and even his double-breasted waistcoat. The two others were young fellows, neophytes in the revolutionary religion which men were now trying to revive in France but a quarter of a century after the Reign of Terror. Fabien had often met them—and not at the house of the baroness, for they never went there—but at the general meetings called together every month by the high *venta*. However, none of them flinched, nor did he. Nothing in their attitude or manner showed that they had ever met before. The judges looked fixedly at them, and could not detect the slightest emotion on their faces.

"You know these men, do you not?" asked the colonel.

"I never saw them before," replied Fabien, quietly.

"They know you."

The prisoners made gestures of denial.

"Very well," said the president. "You are keeping the execrable oath which you all take before the grand master of the Coral Pin Association."

"Oh ! I have taken an oath, have I?" said the viscount, in a mocking tone. "I was not aware of it, and I am obliged to you for the information."

"Yes, you have taken an oath ; you, a man of noble birth, have sworn with your left hand upon a dagger, and your right hand upon your heart, the odious words dictated to you by an enemy of the King and of France. This is the impious formula : 'I swear, by my honour, to sacrifice my fortune and my life to deliver my country from the yoke that oppresses it. I swear to employ all my strength in propagating the principles that animate me. I swear never to reveal what I have just heard, whatever position I may be placed in. If I have the cowardice to betray my brethren, I shall truly deserve death.'"

"This is really very curious," said Fabien in a tone of irony, "but the words are rather big."

"So big that you allowed yourself to be taken in by them," continued the colonel, "and these words represent the frightful principles which you profess, and they have already cost you your honour, and will cost you your life."

"Very well. I see that you have made up your mind to condemn me, and that you pronounce but one sentence, that of death—exactly like the revolutionary tribunals did. It is, therefore, useless for me to defend myself, and you will allow me to sit down."

As he spoke, the viscount resumed both his seat and the haughty attitude which he had taken before the beginning of the interrogatory. He

was resigned to his fate, and almost consoled himself on thinking that Stella, at least, had not been captured by the authorities.

"If they had arrested her," he thought, "they would have confronted me with her."

"Take away these men," said the president, in a loud tone.

The order was immediately executed, the three leaders of the *ventas* going off as mute and emotionless as when they entered.

"You still persist in denying what is evident," resumed the colonel of gendarmerie. "You dare to pretend that you have no connection with these conspirators? Although I cannot constrain you to confess, I must remark to you that the silence you maintain will not save you."

"I am not trying to save myself. I do not tell you anything, because there is nothing to tell. I am innocent, and that is all."

"You are guilty, and we have the proof of it. Must I, so as to open your eyes to your situation, tell you how you entered into relations with the chief of the Carbonari, with the fellow called Hernandez, who passes for a Spanish royalist, but who is only an Italian insurgent, condemned to death by the government of his own country? Must I speak to you of the creature whom he drags about with him, and who has exercised so detestable an influence over you? You change colour. That is confession enough that you have been led astray by the worthy companion of the adventurer whom you obey, by that disreputable woman called Stella Negroni."

"If I change colour," replied Fabien, angrily, "it is because I feel indignant at hearing a French soldier insult a woman."

"A woman who conspires ceases to be a woman. Stella Negroni will undergo the punishment which she deserves. You deny that she has led you astray. Will you deny that you recently received a secret mission from the grandmaster of the Coral Pin Association?"

"Who may the grandmaster of the Coral Pin Association be?" asked the viscount carelessly.

"Always the same system of denial! We shall see if you will hold out to the end! This mission which you pretend to be ignorant of consists in landing the treasures of the Carbonari upon French soil."

"They know that also!" thought Fabien. "Who has betrayed our secrets?" A horrible suspicion flashed through his brain. He asked himself if the traitor could be Hernandez, and if Stella had taken part in the betrayal.

"This treasure, which the enemies of the throne and the altar meant to make use of to put your country to fire and to the sword, this treasure is now upon a Neapolitan brig called the 'Stromboli,' and will soon fall into the hands of government, for a war frigate has received orders to set sail from Lorrent and seize the ship which carries the gold intended to foment revolution. However, you solicited the honour of directing the landing, you asked to be allowed to land this gold intended to bribe and mislead honest soldiers. This crime is provided for by our laws, and under this head—and it suffices—you have incurred the penalty of death."

"Then you may as well sentence me," replied the viscount without evincing the slightest emotion.

"You confess, then?"

"I confess nothing, and you prove nothing. But I am at your mercy, and I shall not attempt a justification which you would refuse to admit even if you did listen to it."

"How is it that you conceived the thought of corrupting French

soldiers?" continued the president, who did not think proper to reprimand the prisoner for his haughty reply. "Look at those loyal defenders of the King, look at them, if you dare, and you will see on their faces all the contempt and horror which they feel for a traitor."

This eloquent outburst made Fabien shrug his shoulders, and as he did so he glanced at the soldiers of the 45th of the Line, upon whose weary countenances nothing but indifference was visible.

"And yet," thought he, "there are some of our brethren among them. Four sergeants of this regiment belong to my *venta*." And then he said aloud: "I presume that I was not brought here to listen to silly speeches. Let us have an end to all this."

"Once more," said the colonel, "do you renounce defending yourself?"

"I do."

"This refusal, I warn you, will be considered as a confession by the military commission which I have the honour to preside."

"I daresay it will."

"You know to what penalty you are about to be sentenced?"

"I do."

"Well, then, the trial is over. Take away the prisoner."

The viscount rose, and followed the adjutant charged with the execution of the sentences pronounced by the court-martial. This adjutant was an old trooper, with grey hair, who looked as though he had served under the Empire, and whose expression of face was not unpleasant. Once in the passage, Fabien asked: "Where are you taking me?"

"Upon my word, young man, if you cannot guess, I would prefer not to tell you."

"Very well. I understand. They are going to shoot me."

"Oh, not right away. They must first decide on the sentence, and then read it aloud to you. You have at least three-quarters of an hour before you."

"Then I shall be executed to-night?"

"That has happened to others before you."

"Yes, I know, to the Duke d'Eughien for instance. The Bourbons imitate Bonaparte, it seems, although they call him a murderer."

"What would you have, young man? You have got into a bad scrape. Conspiracy, and an attempt at enticing soldiers from their duty. The law does not trifle with those things. I pity you all the same, because I believe that you are brave, and you seem to me like a man who is not afraid of anything. I know fellows of the old guard who would not walk as lightly as you are doing now if they knew that a platoon was waiting for them in the courtyard."

"Ah! it is in the yard that the ceremony will be performed, then?" said Fabien, calmly.

The adjutant looked at him, raising the lantern which he carried to do so, and growled out, but in a tone that was audible to the prisoner only: "Come now, you are courageous, though only a civilian, and no fighter, and if I can do anything for you without failing in my duty—"

"Your duty, unfortunately, forbids you to let me escape."

"That is true, but it is hard for you to die in this way without bidding farewell to anyone. At your age a man always has a sweetheart. If you wish to write to yours, well, I will promise to give the letter to her, without reading it or showing it to any one."

"If I were sure of that, I—"

"Young man, I'm neither a spy nor an informer. I have served fourteen years in the 19th Light Infantry, and you can trust me. I give you my word of honour that your commission shall be attended to, and that I will not remember even the name of the lady whom you are in love with."

"Thanks, I believe you, but where and how can I write?"

"There is everything here that you will require," said the officer, putting a key into a door near which he now stood with his prisoner. "But you must make haste, the colonel is coming, and if he knew that I had taken your note, he—"

Then raising his voice, he ordered the men to halt. "Lieutenant, place your men in line in the passage and two sentinels near the cell."

"Stella will know that my last thoughts were of her," said Fabien to himself.

The room into which the adjutant had ushered him was on a level with a courtyard from which a grating separated it. The walls were bare and whitewashed. In the way of furniture there was nothing but a stool and a small table upon which the officer placed his lantern, after closing the door. "Young man," said he, "here are some writing materials. Write as fast as you can, and don't say too much, for in five minutes the colonel will be here. Providing you only put the address properly, I give you my word of honour that your letter shall go faster than by post, and perhaps safer, for I hear that the government opens people's letters now-a-days."

The address! That word made Fabien start and reminded him of the danger of writing. How could a letter reach Stella, with his last farewell, without compromising the brethren of the Coral Pin Association, and even Stella herself? The adjutant was doubtless sincere; but he might be searched, and the letter found and taken from him. The man himself, on seeing the name of Stella Negroni, which he had heard mentioned at the trial, might change his mind and tell his chiefs of a message which might contain the secrets of the conspirators.

"Well, dash it all!" cried the old trooper, seeing that the viscount did not trace a line upon the paper before him, "your ideas don't come to you, eh? I can understand that. In your position, composition isn't an easy matter. Bah! put two or three lines only: 'I adore you;' and then underneath: 'Yours for life'—no, how stupid I am! Never mind; arrange it any way you like, so long as you get the address right."

"No," said Fabien, pushing the paper from him, "I have changed my mind. I shall not write at all."

At this unexpected refusal the adjutant made a gesture of surprise and his face expressed a feeling which Fabien could not understand. "Young man, you mistrust me," said the old trooper. "You are wrong."

"I don't mistrust you," replied the viscount, "but I have thought over the matter. The person to whom I intended to write will not know of my death, as the execution will be secret. So much the better; it would give her useless pain."

"Humph! you have suddenly grown very scrupulous. I don't fancy that is the real reason—but, after all, it is none of my business. I don't so much care about compromising myself to please you."

"I am none the less obliged for your offer. You are the only person who has shown the least feeling for me. I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

The adjutant pressed the hand which the prisoner held out to him, and wiped away a genuine tear just as the door opened.

The president of the commission entered, and Fabien saw from his face that his sentence was pronounced. "Go and wait for me in the courtyard, and prepare the picket," said the colonel, in a low tone, which was, however, audible to M. de Brouage. Then turning to Fabien, the president said, as soon as they were alone, "I have come to fulfil a painful duty, sir."

"Do not condole with me, if you please," replied the viscount. "You have come to tell me that I am condemned to death. I did not expect any other sentence from your justice. I am ready."

"However severe it may be, your sentence is just, sir. Believe me, the King was grieved to have you brought before a military commission. His fatherly heart bled when he was obliged to make up his mind to—"

"What, again!"

"But reasons of state forced him to do so. Between the dishonour that would have fallen upon the name of the Marquis de Brouage and the cruel necessity of authorising an exceptional measure in your case, His Majesty could not hesitate. The general himself approved of it."

"Touching solicitude of an uncle for his nephew!"

"When the King decided thus, he hoped, however, that at the moment of expiating your crime you would be touched by remorse, and that you would atone for the past—"

"By betraying the conspirators whose accomplice you accuse me of being? That is what you mean, eh? This is the infamous act you suggest to me?"

"Do not call an act infamous which would be rewarded by the gratitude and esteem of all true Frenchmen."

"And which would dishonour me in the eyes of all men of feeling. A Brouage never betrays any one. He prefers to die!"

"You are not asked to betray any one. All the leaders of the Coral Pin Association are arrested. We do not need to have them pointed out to us. Besides, if it became necessary later on, to have recourse to informers, there are plenty of them. The government expects you, sir, to render a service of another kind, in exchange for which I now offer you life and liberty! You will be allowed to leave France unmolested, and you will receive a suitable pension abroad."

"It must be some act of great cowardice that you are about to speak of. If it were merely treachery, you would not pay so dearly."

"Listen to me, calmly, if you please. I have already told you that the government knows of the project formed by the Carbonari for landing their treasures in France. You know that a frigate has been sent in pursuit of the ship on which their millions are stored."

"Well, then, the millions will be seized, if there be any to seize. Your sailors are so skilful! Perhaps you have the intention of offering me the command of your frigate?"

"The time is badly chosen for jesting, sir; do you see what is going on behind this grating?"

Fabien turned, and through the bars he saw that several lanterns were flitting about in the courtyard, and by their ambient light he perceived some weapons glittering, and finally distinguished some soldiers in red tunics. "It seems," said he, quietly, "that I am to be shot by men of the Swiss guard. So much the better! It would have been harder to be shot by French soldiers."

The colonel started at this fresh proof of courage on the part of the condemned man, but he was resolved to carry out his mission to the end, and

resumed : "According to all probability, the brig will be captured as you say, but it may escape. It would be much better to guard the place where it is to land the treasure. Now, I must tell you—and this avowal proves that I have told you the truth all along—we do not know what exact point the Carbonari have chosen as a landing place."

"Ah!" thought Fabien, "then it was not Hernandez who betrayed me. If he had done so, he would have revealed everything, since he knew everything."

"Now you know that point," resumed the colonel, "for you proposed to direct the landing; your services were accepted, and you were about to start for some part of the western coast when you were arrested this very night."

"Ah! sir," quietly replied the viscount, "you have a very fertile imagination. The romance which you have been telling me about is really very well conceived. A Neapolitan brig, a treasure, an expedition by night! Ducrey-Duménil, the illustrious author of *Celina; or the Child of Mystery*, might envy your dramatic plot, and profit by it, if he had not, unfortunately, been dead these ten years. Unluckily, I am not of a romantic turn of mind, and I do not believe in the marvellous. If the Carbonari have so much gold as you say, they do not need me, for they could easily find other help. I am not their man. I know nothing. Spare yourself the trouble of insisting any further."

"You perhaps fear their revenge. I repeat, that with your pardon you will be given a passport for abroad."

"Enough!" exclaimed Fabien, in an imperious tone.

"One word more, and but one. Among your accomplices there is one, perhaps, who is especially dear to you—a woman, among others. Well, then, I am authorised to say to you that if you make up your mind to reveal what you know, she will not be disturbed. She will have permission, as well as yourself, to leave France."

The president of the military commission had evidently reserved for the last the temptation which he considered most likely to succeed. He had spoken almost in a whisper, and while he did so he looked at the condemned man with eyes which were evidently accustomed to read all thoughts.

Fabien, however, had sufficient self-control to hide the anguish which was wringing his heart.

"You ought at least to change your game," said he, with haughty irony. "You try to move me by alluding to I know not what—love affair that never existed. You are losing your time. I love, indeed, but what I love is liberty, as passionately as I hate tyrants. And liberty will triumph in spite of you; it will triumph without me. So it is useless to try to move me. I am sentenced; your executioners are ready. Let us go!"

"Very well, sir," said the colonel, gravely. "My mission is at an end, for I now see that I shall obtain nothing from you, and I have done all I could to save you from the fate that awaits you. Prepare to die."

"I am ready."

"If there is anything that you wish to do, any letter you wish to write, there are pen, ink, and paper on this table."

Fabien was about to say, "Again!" but he restrained himself for fear of committing the kind-hearted adjutant, who had offered to carry his message. So he merely replied: "Why should I write? I have no will to make, since my brother is my lawful heir. You do not expect me to solicit my uncle's pardon, I presume?"

"Will the brother, to whom you owe so much, not receive a word of farewell, then?"

The condemned man started, and reflected for a moment. "You are right," he muttered; "I ought to tell him that I thought of him in my last moments."

Then, abruptly seating himself, he began to write. The officer took advantage of the opportunity to approach the grating overlooking the courtyard. A soldier, with a lantern, stood outside, near the bars. At a sign from his superior, he softly opened the grating with a key which hung with others at his belt.

"Read, sir," now said the viscount, holding out to the colonel a sheet of paper, on which he had hastily written a few lines.

They ran as follows:

"I die, sentenced by the iniquitous judges of a bloody tribunal. My sole crime is that I have loved liberty. I am about to be shot as a conspirator. I do not know whether any conspiracy exists against the government which is judicially assassinating me, and I hope that no one else may, like myself, perish a victim to political hatred. The future will avenge me. Do not mourn my death. It redeems my faulty conduct as regards yourself, and I swear to you that I have done nothing that could disgrace our name. Farewell, brother, be happy, and forgive——
FABIEN."

The officer read the letter, and said, in a tone of emotion: "You may be sure, sir, that this letter will be handed to Count René de Brouage tomorrow. Now, please follow me."

Fabien made a slight bow, and with a firm step set forth upon the path to death. Near the grating he found some soldiers of the 45th, the kind-hearted adjutant, the corporal, and the three gendarmes; in fact, all those who had taken part in his arrest and trial.

Before him stretched an esplanade planted with trees and surrounded by lofty buildings, the tops of which disappeared in the darkness. It looked quite like the central court of a fortress, a space intended for drilling and for military executions. Fabien was convinced that he had been taken to Vincennes, and what confirmed him in this belief was the fact that he could vaguely discern some ogival windows and loop-holes in the dark massive edifices which rose above this courtyard, surrounded on every side by walls. However, he cared little about the matter, his only thought was for Stella.

At forty paces from the cell which he had just left stood a body of soldiers in red tunics, belonging probably to the 2nd Swiss Regiment of the Royal Guard, which had been on duty that day in Paris. Further on, the condemned man saw a group of officers and men in civilian clothes. He thought that the officers were the judges who had just before sentenced him, and that the civilians were agents of the government appointed to witness the execution.

"Here we are," said the colonel.

Fabien stood at the place pointed out to him, and waited with his head erect. However, the colonel, instead of giving the signal, drew near him, and said, in a low tone: "There is still time, sir. Say one word, only one, and I will give orders to suspend the execution. A suspension is equivalent to a pardon. You must be aware that four years ago the scaffold was taken down after waiting, on the Place de Grève, for Monnier, the adjutant of

Engineers, who organized the plot of the Black Pin. Mounier made up his mind to make revelations at the moment when he was about to enter the prison-cart. He was saved, as you are aware."

"Saved, but disgraced. Do not hope that I shall imitate him. Go on with your work, sir. You are here to see twelve bullets lodged in my head and breast. Let us have done with all this, I beg. This disgusting comedy has lasted only too long already. It would be cruel on your part to prolong it."

The colonel made a gesture of disappointment, and said with an air of grave commiseration: "Very well, sir. Would you like to give the signal for firing?"

"No. I am not a soldier, and I prefer to die in a quiet way," replied M. de Brouage, without hesitation.

The colonel bowed to him, and stood aside while the picket of soldiers advanced. The adjutant hung up his lantern on a nail in the wall near the condemned man, then retreating a few steps, he unfolded a paper and began to read: "In virtue of a sentence pronounced on the 6th of March, 1821, by the military commission specially summoned by Major-General the Count de Rochechouart, commander of the first sub-division and the city of Paris—"

Fabien was not listening. He was thinking of Stella Negroni, and he closed his eyes so that he might the more clearly bring her adored image before him.

Suddenly the adjutant's voice was no longer heard, and a rougher voice cried out: "Make ready, take aim!"

The guns were levelled:

"Long live liberty!" shouted the Viscount de Brouage.

"Fire!" cried the commander of the detachment.

Fabien awaited death heroically. It did not come. The soldiers who had taken aim at him raised their guns, instead of firing, and before he had time to think, the colonel of gendarmes rushed towards him and embraced him, exclaiming: "I knew very well that you were not a traitor!"

The condemned man tried to free himself from the embrace which he so little expected, and succeeded in doing so, but only to fall into the arms of the adjutant who was shouting: "I have seen devilish brave chaps before now, but I never beheld the like of you!"

At the same time the Swiss surrounded him, the judges applauded him, the troopers of the 45th of the Line ran forward to bear him in triumph, and the gendarmes who had arrested him danced with very joy.

Fabien did not know whether he was dreaming, or whether all these people had suddenly gone mad. However, three men whom he immediately recognised, emerged from the throng. They were the three *renta* presidents who had appeared before the military commission. "Forgive us, brother!" said the oldest of them, the white-haired conspirator.

"Forgive you?" stammered Fabien; "will you explain to me? What does this mean?"

"Forgive us for having put you to this test."

"This test? It was a test?"

"Yes, brother, and you have borne it so gloriously, that we do not regret having subjected you to it."

"This tribunal, then—"

"Was composed of five presidents of *rentas*, with whom you were not

acquainted. We shared the parts among us. We three who were already your friends could only come in as prisoners."

"And these soldiers of the line, these Swiss and gendarmes—"

"Are all brethren of the Coral Pin Association, like the coachman who drove you here."

"And I," said the adjutant, "have served the Emperor, but I do not serve the Bourbons. Since they split my ear, six years ago, this is the first time I have worn a uniform."

"And I," said the spurious colonel of the gendarmes, "instead of being the president of a military commission, am the president of the *venta* called L'Amitié."

Fabien, who had had great difficulty in freeing himself from the embraces of his friends, listened to these declarations, frowning. He now understood everything clearly, even too clearly, and with the satisfaction he felt at the fortunate ending of his adventure, there was mingled another feeling.

"As I had to be put to the test, I was suspected, I suppose?" said he.

"Not only were you suspected," replied the man with the double-breasted waistcoat, "but you were accused of treason."

"By whom?"

"I do not know. You are aware that everything that takes place at the high *venta* is kept secret. The brethren receive and execute the orders it gives. It is forbidden for them to discuss them or to inquire into their cause."

"Then I was denounced to the high *venta*?"

"Yes, brother; and the high *venta* decided that you should be put to the great test, and chose me to give the grandmaster an account of the result. In another hour he will know that you are the bravest and truest of our brethren."

"But come," asked Fabien, impatiently, "what was I reproached with?"

"You have enemies among us on account of your being a nobleman."

"What does it matter, if I am a nobleman? Is every brother not fortunate enough to be born without a title to be suspected then? That is a strange way of understanding equality."

"Don't complain. You have silenced your slanderers and discouraged those who are envious of you. Who ever now dared to say a word against you, would be reproved and driven away by all of us."

"Yes! yes!" shouted all the Carbonari present.

"Silence, brothers!" said the old chief. "These deserted buildings are vast, this court is surrounded by high walls, but let us be prudent; if we should be overheard from outside, an alarm would be given. And if ever the police enter here, our association will be in peril."

"Where are we?" asked Fabien.

"In one of the buildings of the Temple."

"The Temple where Louis XVI. was imprisoned? But it no longer exists."

"The keep and the convent were razed to the ground in 1811, but certain adjacent buildings remained standing. They were then sold as national property, with the immense gardens of the inclosure, and one of the leaders of our society has leased the whole from the new owner, under pretext of using the place as a storehouse. We are therefore at home here, and no one knows that we come here, thanks to the precautions taken by the grandmaster. Besides, only selected brethren come here, and those but seldom. The vaults of the Templars contain our dépôts of weapons and uniforms.

It is from this whilom asylum of superstition that liberty will emerge when the great day of revolution dawns. But it is time now, brethren, for us to disperse. Let each take his civilian clothes and leave separately by the little gateway. I will not insult you by reminding you that when you set foot in the street you, all of you, must forget everything that has taken place here to-night."

The brothers came one after another to shake hands with Fabien, and then vanished beneath a vault the archway of which was but dimly visible.

Only the spurious colonel, the spurious adjutant, and the three spurious prisoners remained. All of these held a high rank among the Carbonari, and the eldest of them had things to tell Fabien which were to be heard by them alone. He went towards the cell which the condemned man had occupied for the few moments which he had believed to be the last of his life. "Here, brother," said the ex-president of the commission, "here is your letter. Fortunately there is no need of delivering it. But I must once more congratulate you. To think of denying, by writing, the existence of our association, when you had but five minutes more to live, was great, noble, and worthy of antiquity."

"I don't know anything about antiquity," said the veteran, who had played the part of the adjutant, "but I declare that Brother Fabien's most wonderful exploit was to refuse to write to his sweetheart; and I am sure it was not because he mistrusted me—I managed matters so well."

"So well that I was completely deceived. But I had no great merit in refusing, as I have no sweetheart. Was it you, brother, who thought of that trick?" added Fabien. He wished to know whether the idea had been initiated by Hernandez.

"It came quite naturally to me, upon my word," said the old trooper. "I am an old monkey, and I know all about grimaces. When I saw a man about to be shot who did not give way at thought of his sweetheart, I said to myself, 'That fellow is a regular brick; his heart must be bullet proof!' And so yours must be; but as for believing that you have no sweetheart, I am no such fool on my honour as an old chasseur of the guard; besides, you admitted it at first."

"Did I?" said Fabien, smiling. "Well, then, so be it. Let us leave all that, and allow me to tell you how I admire the perfection with which the whole affair was got up."

"It is not the first time that a similar test has been made," said the old chief. "Others besides yourself have endured it, and all of them did not come out of it safely."

"I should have been shot, had I gone wrong, should I not?"

"I should have given orders to take you down into the great vault of the convent, to smash your skull with the butts of the guns, and bury you there; but I well knew that you were no traitor. I had answered for you to the grandmaster of the Association. You say that the scene was well got up. Something was wanting, however."

"What was it?"

"Did you not feel surprised that the consolation of religion wasn't offered you? You know very well that under the rule of His Majesty, the most Christian King, nobody is sent to death without a priest accompanying him."

"That is true," exclaimed the Viscount de Brouage, "but I never thought of it."

This answer was so spontaneous and frank that the face of the man with

the Robespierre waistcoat showed the greatest satisfaction, and this veteran of the Revolution indeed threw himself into the arms of Fabien who was amazed. "That is well, my son!" he exclaimed. "You spoke with sincerity. I doubt you no more!"

"Then you still doubted?"

"Yes; I wondered whether you hadn't guessed that the whole thing was a farce, and on pointing out the one defect of the performance, I closely watched your face. I thought that you might, perhaps, show some confusion, and if you had, I should have concluded that I had guessed correctly, that you had found out our purpose, and that your firmness was not a proof of your courage, since you knew that judgment and execution alike were but shams. But you did not bleuch, you did not hesitate, and I loudly declare that you were quite sincere."

"You carry your distrust very far, brother," said Fabien, with a disdainful smile.

"We are obliged to do so. We live in Paris like an army encamped in an enemy's country, and we cannot be too careful. Besides, it was not to lay a trap for you that we did not have a chaplain ready. We have a storehouse full of army clothing, which we expect to use when the revolution breaks forth. Our brethren will put the uniforms on, and glide in among the troops and endeavour to win them over to our side. Only we have no clerical garb, and the orders for the trial not having been given until late yesterday, we had no time to procure any."

"I have no grudge against you on that account," said M. de Bronage, in an ironical tone.

"Let us leave all recrimination and suspicion aside," said the old leader. "You are fully justified, and our brethren expect an immense service from you. The time for action has come."

"For action? But only to-night, a few hours ago, the grandmaster told me that our Association was in danger, that a spy had found his way into the house near which I was arrested, that the baroness and her niece had been denounced—"

"They are already beyond danger. When the police search the house in the Rue de Monsieur, they will find no one. The master is ready to defend himself if disturbed by them. The Marquis de Santa Cruz, the Spanish ambassador in Paris, will answer for him. A mere mishap will not suffice to prevent or even to delay the revolution now being prepared. Just now, while our brethren were pretending to try you, the master sent me a message concerning you. The landing of the treasure is decided upon. The *Stromboli* has left the little Breton port where she was at anchor; she has set sail for the coast of Saintonge, and at this moment must be cruising between the Ile de Ré and the Ile d'Oleron. You must start for Bronage, brother, for the offer which you have made is accepted. Your château is to shelter our treasure."

"When must I start?"

"To-day, at noon."

"At noon? Impossible!"

"Impossible! and why? that word has no place in the language of the Association. You will not compel me to remind you that you owe passive obedience to the grandmaster! At twelve precisely a post-chaise will await you on the Orleans road, half way between the Barrière d'Enfer and Montrouge. You must leave Paris on foot, enter the vehicle at the place which I name, and—"

"So be it. I will go. How long must I remain at Brouage?"

"I cannot tell you, but I know that you will find some one there who will tell you the orders of the grandmaster."

"Onc of the brethren, I presume?"

The old chief did not reply to this question, but he added: "The orders are that on leaving here you must go straight home. The master forbids you speaking with any one before starting, or showing yourself in the street, and especially your going to the house of the baroness which is now probably surrounded by the police."

The viscount hung his head as this shower of formal orders fell upon him. They greatly distressed him, for he longed to see Stella again, and the necessity of shutting himself up at Brouage still further increased the grief caused by his sudden separation from her. "Who will give me any news of her?" he thought mournfully. "Shall I even know what has become of her?"

Then he reflected that the exile to which he was condemned would not last long, as the landing would soon be effected; and he replied, with some firmness: "I will obey. I have something to arrange, some papers to burn, as a precaution against surprise. So I have no time to lose."

"Come, brother," said the oldest of the conspirators, "I will take you to a door that opens upon a deserted street. When you pass out, walk on without looking back, and try to forget the way to the place where our mysteries are hidden."

Ten minutes later, the viscount found himself alone upon the Paris pavement. A few hours afterwards, he was rolling in the post-chaise along the Orleans road, taking with him in his heart the beloved image of Stella Negroni, whom he had not been able to see before his departure,

VI.

Two months have gone by. May has come, and although the Coral Pin Association is still secretly at work, it has not yet overthrown the Bourbon Government. His Majesty, Louis XVIII., is still upon the throne, and enjoys perfect health, driving out every day in an open carriage, and at a rapid gallop, along the dusty flat road to Argenteuil. The infant Duc de Bordeaux has been baptized at Notre Dame with great pomp. His august mother has started on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Notre Dame de Lièssé, near Laon. The Duchesse d'Angoulême is preparing to start for Vichy. The Dames de la Halle have offered a great ball to the King and royal family. Poets are singing the praises of the royal infant, the budding hope of France. Cantatas, odes and dithyrambs are heard everywhere. The session of the Chamber of Deputies is drawing to an end, and the Court of Peers is trying, at its leisure, some obscure conspirators arrested in the month of August, 1820.

There seems nothing gloomy abroad. People barely talk of troubles in Greece. The revolution has been stifled in Italy and has made no progress in Spain. France is at peace with foreign powers, after having made war upon them all for twenty years. At home, she is calm and prosperous.

Paris is very gay, and occupied with fashions, theatricals, balls, and tittle tattle. Women wear muslin dresses with tight sleeves and three rows of little flounces upon their skirts, kerchiefs of black lace, and dainty kid shoes, with gaiters of light grey cloth. They set upon their pretty

heads flat turbans of gauze worked with gold, or nets of artificial flowers, covering the knot of hair at the back, in imitation of the Etruscan head-dresses. The men display nankeen pantaloons, nut-coloured dress-coats, and large hats with wide brims, and a long nap, very broad at the top, and called "Bolivars," in memory of the liberator of Colombia.

There are also straw bolivars. Dartois and Gabriel have sung about them in a *vaudeville* as well as about lithography, which is making quite a sensation.

"Long live lithography !
 'Tis everywhere the rage !"

Thus hum the dandies who leave the Variétés to go to Frascati's or the Hôtel Daugny, where the Cercle des Etrangers meets. First performances follow upon one another at all the theatres. At the Français the King's Comedians are performing *Frédégonde* and *Brunehaut*, a tragedy by M. Lemercier, and the *Faux Bonhomme*, a comedy by M. Alexandre Duval. There are even people to be found who admire the tender Brunehaut. Désaugiers has just been appointed manager of the Vaudeville, which is having great success with *Frontin, Husband and Bachelor*, by Scribe, but which has lost the incomparable actor Gontier, who has been engaged by the Gymnase, where high terms are given him, six thousand francs a year, and benefits besides. Moreover, there is great prodigality everywhere : Barba the publisher has given twelve hundred francs to Wafard and Fulgence for the *Trip to Dieppe*, the most successful play of 1820. Mlle. Naldi is singing at the Théâtre Italien, the management of which has just been abandoned by Madame Catalini, now almost reduced to bankruptcy. The Opera, which has taken as much as eighteen thousand francs during the month of January, has given, in February, the *Death of Tasso*, the music by Garcia, and libretto by Cavalier. The company still performs in the old hall of the Place Louvois, but it is hoped that the new house in the Rue Le Peletier will be opened in the month of August, with an opera and ballet—the *Bayadères* and *The Return of Zephyr*. It is rumoured that it will be lit by gas. The Odéon is already lighted in that way, and the papers declare that the new mode of illumination does not "smell so very badly."

The Porte Saint-Martin is making a deal of money with its carnival piece, *The Gods at La Courtille*. At the Opéra Comique, Martin is attracting a crowd in the *New Lord of the Manor*. The Panorama-Dramatique is being kept up, thanks to *Alexis ; or a Good Father's Mistake*, and is preparing a new melodrama called the *Temple of Death*. Even the Panorama de Jerusalem and the Diaphanorama are making money.

Actors are greatly talked of. Mademoiselle Duchesnois is indisposed. Mademoiselle Georges, who has for four years past been absent from the Comédie Française, is at law with it. Perlet, of the Gymnase, has quarrelled with the public because he would not repeat a verse from the *Actors of Etampes* for the second time, and as he could not be sent to For l'Evêque, no longer in existence, the authorities took him to police headquarters. He has since been set at liberty, but has refused to apologize.

The newspapers are taking great pains with their theatrical criticism. Some indeed no longer print theatrical news under the same heading as fashions. At the *Journal des Débats*, formerly an organ of the Empire, Duviquet has become critic in place of the terrible Geoffroy, whose death had been announced in the following epigram :

“ You’ve heard the news ? poor Geoffroy is no more.
 He’s dead : they bury him this very night.
 What ailed him ? I don’t know, but I feel sure,
 He must have sucked his pen—imprudent wight.”

Delécluse does not yet write the articles upon fine arts. These are penned by an ingenuous being who praises the King for having condescended to accept the present of a statue of Venus, found on the Island of Milo, “ *although it is very much damaged.*” The same writer also praises the School of Arts for not allowing the pupils to paint nude studies of the feminine form.

The newspapers are all prosperous. The *Quotidienne* has six thousand subscribers, the *Débats* thirteen thousand, and the *Constitutionnel* seventeen thousand. The *White Flag*, edited by Martainville, appears with the heading : “ Long live the King, no matter what happens !” Carmouche, Charles Nodier, Pouqueville, and Lemennais, write for it. It is the advanced guard of royalism. It every day declares that the liberals ought to be ranged in three categories : First, the infamous robbers ; secondly, the ambitious slaves ; and thirdly, the sanguinary hypocrites. The *Quotidienne*, edited by Michaud and Fiévée, is the organ preferred by the nobility and clergy. It numbers among its contributors men of wit like Merle, and song-writers and vaudeville-writers who make fierce war upon the revolutionists. More serious and less violent, the *Gazette de France* counts writers of the highest order, such as Joseph de Maistre and de Bonald, but it is less read. The *Journal de Paris*, the *Etoile*, and the *Pilote* complete the list of royalist papers, with the exception of the *Moniteur Officiel*. The *Nain Jaune* has been turned into the *Liberal*, a curious publication which counts among its anonymous contributors King Louis XVIII. himself. He has his contributions thrown into the letter-box at the office, and his short articles are by no means badly written ; the *Nain Jaune* has moreover invented the order of the Extinguisher for the use of those who admire the old mode of government, and the order of the Weathercock for politicians in general. The *Minerve* is dead, killed by the official censors. It was a kind of review started by Benjamin Constant, Jay, Jouy, and Etienne, a dull publication appearing once a month, and serving up a kind of salad of the immortal principles of 1789, the military spirit of the Empire, and constitutional freedom. However, the *Constitutionnel* is as alive as possible. It originated during the Hundred Days, and was started, it was said, by Fouché, the Duc d’Otranto ; and it has become the official paper of all envious, discontented, and conceited citizens. Not a rich manufacturer or flourishing dealer, not an advocate but who subscribes to this conservative and fractious paper, which is, however, promoted by the least conservative people ; Génond, formerly a jurymen of the Revolutionary tribunal ; Rousselin, the friend of Danton ; and Jullien, the son of a conventional regicide.

Literature flourishes. Reading-rooms abound. The *Solitaire*, published in January, has already reached its fifth edition. *Agatha, or the Little Old Man of Culais*, by Victor Ducange, and *Palmyra and Flamina ; or, the Secret*, by Madame de Genlis, divide public favour between them. A young poet whom M. de Chateaubriand calls “ a sublime child,” and whose name is Victor Hugo, has just issued a few odes breathing the purest royalism, and entitled the *Statue of Henri IV.*, the *Virgins of Verdun*, and *Louis XVII.* The Middle Ages are beginning to be fashionable, but a fanciful kind of Middle Ages, represented by troubadours and noble dames taking the place of Mars and Venus on all the clocks. M. de Marchangy’s

Poetical Gaul is an authority, and fifteen years have not exhausted the success of the romance in which Madame de Cottin so touchingly relates the loves of Malek-Adhel, the Saracen, and the susceptible Mathilde, the sister of Richard Cœur de Lion.

However, the Parisians amuse themselves, despite this overflow of knights "starting for Syria" and bards in apricot-coloured tunics. They even amuse themselves with a kind of frenzy. The wooden galleries of the Palais Royal have never been more frequented; Nos. 9, 36, 113, and 154, are choke full of card-players. But there is a breath of spring in the air, the trees have put forth their leaves, and the summer-gardens announce their fêtes. Tivoli, Beaujon, the Delta, and Marboeuf, are open, and Ranelagh is about to open also. People already go to Tortoni's to eat ices, served by the waiter Prévost, the politest man in France, who has never approached a customer without saying: "Excuse me, sir, but have you the kindness to wish for anything?" or to admire the cannons made by Spolar, the most skilful billiard-player in the world, patronized even by M. de Talleyrand, and his friend Montrond.

There are more duels than ever. On the 10th of April, Manuel, a broker, was killed in a duel with Pistols. Fayot, who, in 1819, put a bullet into the heart of young Saint-Marcellin, the illegitimate son of M. de Fontanes, Fayot still continues his murderons exploits. Politics even make more victims than he does. It is enough to breakfast at the Café Lemblin if you are a guardsman, or at the Café Valois if you are a liberal, to meet with an adversary who proposes a duel. There is fighting in the Bois de Boulogne, the Bois de Vincennes, at Belleville, and at Clichy; there is fighting in all directions, with pistols, swords, and sabres; there is fighting in the morning, in the afternoon, and even at night-time.

There is conspiring also. Carbonarism is on the increase. It has reached the army, and military revolts merely await an opportunity to break forth in the east, the west, and in Paris itself. The signal, however, has not yet been given. The grandmaster of the Coral Pin Association is ready, but the French leaders hesitate. They don't care to risk their heads, and they continue to protest publicly that they are devoted to the constitutional charta. They no longer assemble at Madame de Casanova's, for she has disappeared, but they still meet with men of action in the *ventas* which are spreading with incredible rapidity.

The police are stirring, but they fail to discover anything. Loquetières lost his chance through his unlucky game of *écarté*. He has not succeeded in finding either the baroness or Stella Negroni. These ladies and their servants have vanished like phantoms, and no one has been caught in the trap set at the house in the Rue de Monsieur. The Spaniard, Hernandez, has been watched, but the life he leads is so quiet that he is no longer spied upon. Since Viscount Fabien, left Paris, nothing more has been heard of him. Colonel Fournès passes the daytime quietly riding about and spends his evenings playing chess at the Café de la Régence.

As for the pupil of M. de Sartines, he is despondent, for he has not succeeded in finding Count Henri's murderer.

However, there is a person still more unhappy than he, and this is René de Brouage. He had not been able to penetrate the mystery of his cousin's tragic death, and has not yet dared to keep his promise to Octavie de Saint-Hélier. How can he ask for the hand of the girl who was secretly affianced to him on that fatal night of the 5th of March, and ask it when his mourning is so recent? How can he obtain the consent of his uncle, or even ~~the~~

him of his intention of making a marriage which the marquis will look upon as a *mésalliance*? Octavie at first appeared to understand the reasons which he brought forward for his delay. She received him in the daytime in her father's study—for the chevalier left her entirely at liberty—and always showed him the same impassioned tenderness. She positively refused to marry the husband proposed by M. de Saint-Hélier, and now she is free, and waits, but not patiently. Her glances plainly show that she is surprised at René's hesitation, and will soon take offence at it.

This is why, one fine morning in May, René having made up his mind to brave the general's anger, and to put an end to an intolerable situation, might have been met on the way to the Ile Saint-Louis. On reaching the house, he found in the hall old Pierre Dugué, who respectfully evinced his delight at seeing him.

"Can I see my uncle?" asked René.

"The marquis has just breakfasted, if it can be called breakfasting," said the old Chouan. "Since the death of Monsieur Henri the marquis scarcely eats anything. He is in the drawing-room with Mademoiselle Antoinette and the English governess."

"Ah! my cousin is with him, then?" said René, with an air of vexation.

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte," replied the steward, "mademoiselle is always with the marquis now; and it is very fortunate, for if he were deprived of the presence and care of his daughter, he would not be able to resist his sorrow! What a blow! if he were not as strong as he is, he could not bear it. To lose his only son, so young, so brave! Poor Monsieur Henri! Ah! those rascally liberals who killed him ought to be broken on the wheel on the Placc de Grève. When I think that the murderer isn't yet discovered, and that the detective with the green coat has not even found the cut-throat place where he was taken—ah, me!"

"I also have looked for the place," said the young count, "and I cannot find it."

"And to think that the family will die out, and that there will be no one of the name of Brouage left!" continued Pierre Dugué. "To think that my master won't have the consolation of embracing any grandchildren before he dies!"

"There are still three of us of the name, however."

"Yes, but the marquis won't marry, for he is past the age. Your brother—excuse my frankness!—no longer counts in the family, and you, Monsieur le Comte, seem to think nothing whatever about marrying."

"What do you know of that, my old Pierre?" said René, who could not restrain a smile at the anxiety so simply expressed by the faithful servant.

"Really!" exclaimed the old soldier, "you have not given up the idea? You are perhaps thinking of it? Ah! if you really are, there will be a way to make up for the misfortune that has happened—it would, in fact, be very easy, if you were willing. For I see clearly into what is going on, although I cannot now bring down a 'Republican' quite as well at two hundred paces as formerly; however, I hear a good deal. Why it was only yesterday that Mademoiselle Antoinette was saying to Miss Betsy that—"

"Is my uncle better to-day?" interrupted René, who was listening very inattentively to what the butler was saying.

"No better and no worse. He is overwhelmed. He falls asleep every moment, he who used to be so lively and active!"

"Is he in a good humour?"

"A good humour?" repeated Pierre Dugué with surprise.

"Yes, I wish to speak to him on a delicate matter. I have a favour to ask of him, and one which he won't be disposed to grant; and if I thought it was a bad time, I—"

"A favour?" said the old Chouan, who was dying to ask what the favour could be. "Why should he refuse you, Monsieur le Comte? It will be the first one you have ever asked, and the marquis complains to me that you never ask anything of him. Besides, he is very fond of you. He never believed the slanders of those lawyers who made insinuations about you. What could he have against you? You unwittingly helped the murderer to get rid of the body of poor Monsieur Henri, but you would have killed the fellow if you had known what he had done. You would willingly have risked your life for your cousin's sake, I'm sure of it. No, no, the marquis has no ill-feeling against you. Lately, it seems to me, too, that when Mademoiselle Antoinette mentions you, and she does so very often, he shows signs of emotion. And it is quite natural. You are his only hope, now."

"Then you think that I should do well to speak to him and try to obtain—"

"His consent?" interrupted Pierre, with his countenance lighting up.

"Yes; it is a consent that I wish to obtain of him."

"Oh, count, you couldn't choose a better time. The marquis was saying only last night, that his name would die out now. But Mademoiselle Antoinette mentioned you, somehow or other, and he did not get angry, far from it. He said: 'He is truly one of our blood. He has the heart of a real nobleman.'"

"I will make the attempt, then. Take me to the drawing-room."

"Joyfully, Monsieur le Comte! You will find Mademoiselle Antoinette there, but she won't be in the way, on the contrary."

René did not share this view of the matter, but not having the faintest suspicion of the idea which the old Chouan had taken into his head, he made no reply. "I shall be obliged to wait till my cousin leaves us alone, that is all," he thought. "I am not sorry that she should be present at first. She may perhaps help me. She is so kind-hearted."

Pierre was beside himself with joy. He climbed the grand staircase with the agility of a young man, and muttered, as he went: "Heaven be praised! if everything could only be settled at once! If, before I die, I could only have the pleasure of holding a little Brouage on my lap, and making him ride on my knee, as I used to do with Monsieur Henri!—the Republicans shouldn't kill him—for I hope that in two or three years' time, there will be no more of them left in France; we shall be well rid of all those ruffians."

René was not thinking of the Republicans at that moment. The nearer he came to the critical moment, the more his trouble increased. He almost turned back, but Octavie's image rose before him and gave him courage.

"I will not announce you, count," said the steward. "It is quite possible that the marquis may still be dozing, and it would do him harm to rouse him suddenly. Besides, you had better speak to Mademoiselle Antoinette about it first. The Englishwoman is with her, but that doesn't matter. She is in the secret."

René, this time, began to wonder what the old fool was talking about, and what secret he could possibly mean. Indeed, he was about to ask him, but Pierre softly opened the door, and the young count had to enter the vast, solemn reception-room where he had had so painful a conversation with Loquetières two months before.

The Chouan had guessed the truth. The marquis, ensconced in a large arm-chair, was sleeping soundly. A few paces from him his daughter was seated at a buhl table, making a pencil copy of a portrait of her brother, by Duchesne de Gisors, the great miniature painter of the day. It was a masterpiece, and represented Count Henri in his guardsman's uniform. Near her, the English governess, Miss Elizabeth Tufton, usually called Miss Betsy, was absorbed in the perusal of "*Kenilworth*," Sir Walter Scott's novel, then just issued.

Both were in deep mourning, but black was very unbecoming to the bad complexion and sandy hair of poor Miss Betsy; while it brought out admirably the pure features and touching grace of Antoinette de Brouage. There are striking styles of beauty which produce a dazzling effect; Octavie was of that style. Others, like Cécilia d'Ascoli, are more perfect but less dazzling, and seem intended to serve as models for painters and sculptors. Antoinette had beauty of a different kind. Baron Gerard, who painted Madame de Staël as Corinne, David, who reproduced the cold countenance of Madame Récamier, would not have chosen her as their model.

Her forehead, nose and mouth were not Grecian, but her blue eyes, of a perfect sapphire hue, had a deal of expression. The blood coursed rosy and warm in her soft cheeks. Everything about her revealed high birth. She had an arched instep to her little foot which would have set well in Cinderella's slipper, her hands were worthy of a queen, her chestnut hair was wonderfully fine, her figure light and supple, and her voice extremely sweet, that kind of golden voice for which Madame Sarah Bernhardt is so celebrated. The prominent characteristic of her charming face was its penetrating charm, which went to the very heart.

René de Brouage could scarcely have remained indifferent to so much loveliness, if the imperious daughter of M. de Saint-Hélier had not taken possession of him with the witchery of a lovely demon. He was not unaware of his young cousin's charms. He admired her intelligence, her goodness and her grace. He liked to see and hear her. He also believed that she entertained a lively and sincere friendship for him. She had indeed given him proof of it. How many times had she tried to calm her father's anger when he did not approve of René's proceedings, as was often the case! She had even gone so far as to defend Fabien to the marquis, although she had greatly disapproved of the viscount's course as unworthy of a Brouage.

René, therefore, relied as much as Pierre Dugué upon the support of his cousin to succeed in the hazardous enterprise he had undertaken. A smile lit up the young girl's face as soon as he appeared in the drawing-room, and a blush rose to her cheeks. She pointed to the sleeping general, and with her dainty hand, tipped with rosy transparent nails, she made him a sign to enter quietly. This gesture caused Miss Betsy to raise her head and look up from the book in which she was so greatly interested.

The governess, who had now become merely a companion, for she had finished educating Antoinette, was the complete type of the well-known English old maid. She was tall, thin, and angular. She had pale blue eyes, long projecting teeth, a long, sharp nose and a narrow face. She had a look of the Duke of Wellington about her, and when she came into a room, on her large flat feet, with her chin protruding, one arm hanging down, and the other held across her flat chest, she looked like a grenadier going to storm a fortress. However, despite her unpleasing countenance, she had a sensitive heart, and tender soul. Elizabeth Tufton,

from her earliest childhood, had been dreaming of pure love, mysterious affinities, and ethereal feelings ; and if she had not realised her dreams, it was the fault of nature which had endowed her with a bodily form ill-calculated to inspire passion.

She had, however, finally become reconciled to her lot, and consoled herself by trying to put her own fancies into her pupil's head. She never ceased harping upon "marriages of reason," as she termed French marriages, and praising the superiority of the customs of her native country, where young girls selected their own husbands, and engaged themselves without the permission of their parents.

It is true that the simple-minded and sentimental creature made up for these slight defects by the tender love and devotion which she felt for Mademoiselle de Brouage. Antoinette was very fond of her, and to a certain extent she was under her influence, though she was far more sensible than her companion. She had great energy and sense inherited from her father ; and she was incapable of being attracted by anything commonplace ; such as the susceptible Betsy would have been charmed with.

But she was not incapable of love, and René, without knowing it, had won her heart. She was too refined to allow René to suspect this, or that she had made up her mind never to marry, unless she married him. Miss Elizabeth Tufton, however, assured her that frankness, in such a case, was a positive duty. Antoinette, in point of fact, limited herself to hoping that René would guess her feelings and declare himself. The poor child never dreamed that he might love another, for, in her innocence, she thought that it was enough to love, to be loved in return. And, for a year past, she had been thinking of a means of surmounting the obstacles before her, for she foresaw that difficulties would arise if she aimed at marrying her cousin. She had studied her father, and was now endeavouring to gently conquer his prejudices, and to make him aware of the merits of René de Brouage.

The death of her brother and her grief thereat had recently interfered with these quiet endeavours, and, besides, the young count's visits had been less frequent since that fatal event. However, Antoinette saw a gleam of light ahead, for she knew that the general longed to perpetuate the name of Brouage, and like Pierre Dugué, she said to herself that the name now dwelt in René alone, as Fabien had voluntarily excluded himself from the family.

At the moment when René entered, she had been thinking of him, wondering whether he would ever guess her love. The embarrassment and emotion legible in her cousin's face surprised her, and at once gave rise to a faint hope in her heart.

"My father is asleep," said she, in a low tone, as soon as René had seated himself beside her. "When he awakes, he will be very glad to see you."

"I hope that he will, my dear cousin," stammered René. "I must speak to him, to-day, upon a subject which—which interests me, and I am afraid that he may not be in the humour to hear me."

Mademoiselle de Brouage had blushed slightly when the young count had entered. This time she reddened to the roots of her hair, and cast down her eyes. Her heart whispered to her that René had come to propose for her hand. We have all heard "the voice of the heart ;" and the heart indeed speaks, especially the heart of woman, but it often deceives those who listen to it.

René, on his side, did not even notice that Antoinette was agitated. He

glanced aside at the general and tried to find some hope on the stern face of the soldier nobleman. There might be some indulgence to be discovered in its expression. But the ex-colonel of the 9th Dragoons slept heavily, as he must have slept in Russia after one of the crushing days of the fatal retreat of 1812, and his features merely expressed profound dejection.

Meantime, Miss Betsy had shut up Sir Walter Scott's absorbing novel. The susceptible governess was deeply smitten with the unfortunate Amy Robsart, so cruelly treated by Leicester, her husband, and the narrative had not changed her pre-conceived opinions, although this love-match had proved so disastrous to the heroine of the romance. At the first words spoken by the young count, Betsy had the same thought as her beloved pupil, and she gave Mademoiselle de Brouage a look which was as much as to say: "I knew very well that he was in love with you."

"There is nothing unpleasant, nothing has happened to you?" asked Antoinette, endeavouring to control her emotion, but succeeding very badly in the effort.

"No, cousin; nothing unpleasant," replied René.

"You must think that I am very easily alarmed, but you must overlook that, for I am still under the effect of the misfortune that has fallen upon me—upon all of us, and I am always trembling for those I love."

"It was so frightful and occurred so recently, that I hesitate about speaking to my uncle," said René, without otherwise replying to the timid avowal which the pure young girl had hidden in her affectionate words.

"I—I don't know whether I understood you or not. You say you wish to ask something of my father?"

"Yes, cousin."

"And you dare not venture on account of our mourning?"

"I am afraid that, at this sad time, the attempt which I am about to make, may seem out of place."

"We shall always wear mourning in our hearts, and if your happiness depends upon this step, my father will forgive you for not deferring it. He is so kind and has such friendship for you. You are now the last of his name."

"It is because of that that I fear his refusal."

"What can the matter be?" asked the young girl, quite disconcerted by this reply, which did not agree with her own suppositions at all.

"It is a very delicate matter that I can't tell you about."

"You have no confidence, then, in me?"

"Oh, yes, I have, cousin! In whom should I confide, if not in you who are so kind? But you must not, you cannot, hear what I wish to say to my uncle."

"You are mistaken, sir," said Miss Betsy, gravely. "My dear Antoinette really ought to hear your declaration. If you were an Englishman, you would speak to her before speaking to her father."

The count stared at the governess as though she had spoken to him in Chinese.

"You almost frighten me, cousin," said Mademoiselle de Brouage. "I cannot imagine what motive makes you hide a project which, you say, interests you so greatly. Am I not your nearest relative, your friend—"

René made a gesture which signified that he did not doubt his cousin's regard, and that he returned it, but the simple-hearted young girl mistook its meaning. "Why should I not help you to persuade my father?" she

stammered. "I am quite sure that you have nothing to say that could offend him."

"Offend him, no—at least, I hope not; but I am afraid of irritating him."

"You do not understand him. He is quick at times, even abrupt, and he has certain pre-conceived ideas of his own, but he is very just. Besides, he is very fond of you, and if you will let me plead your cause—"

"Would you do so for me?" asked René, whose face lighted up on hearing this.

Antoinette was greatly disturbed, and her heart beat fast. She thought that the decisive moment had come, that René was about to confess that he had come to propose for her hand, and she hesitated to encourage him in his avowal. She consulted Miss Betsy by a glance, and the latter languishingly murmured: "You must speak, my dear girl; an English girl would have spoken out before now."

"Well, cousin," said Mademoiselle de Brouage, in a voice so low that René could scarcely hear it, "I am ready to join my entreaties to yours to induce my father to grant you his consent."

"Oh, cousin, how good and kind you are! I should never have dared to hope that you would second me. My whole life shall be devoted to proving my gratitude to you. It is to you, to you alone, that I shall be indebted for my happiness. You will move my uncle's heart, he will not drive me to despair, and a refusal would do so, for it would place me in the frightful necessity of braving his refusal, his anger, or—forgive me, if I say this before you, but I see that you have guessed my secret—or of renouncing the hope of becoming the husband of a young girl whom I love with all the strength of my soul. If I have not yet told you her name, it is because—"

"Why tell me, as I have already guessed it?" said Mademoiselle de Brouage, half suffocated by joy.

"Well, sir," said the English governess, "do you still think that your countrymen are right in placing propriety before feeling? Ah! we don't understand marriage, the sacred union of hearts, in that way."

"Marriage! What marriage?" growled the general, suddenly waking up.

Carried away by her sentimental feelings, Miss Betsy had quite forgotten that the marquis was sleeping close by, and had spoken much louder than Antoinette and René had done, with the result that she had aroused M. de Brouage.

René started and turned quickly round; but on seeing the gloomy face of his uncle, who was rising from his chair and coming straight towards him, he lost all the courage which he had derived from his cousin's words.

"What is going on here?" now asked the marquis, angrily.

His daughter ran up to him and put her arms around his neck, and he allowed her to kiss him, but resumed in a tone that did not admit of a reply: "My dear Antoinette, I beg of you to go into the little drawing-room with Miss Tufton. I will call you back presently, but just now I have something important to say to your cousin, and I wish to be left alone with him."

The young girl turned pale, and her beautiful eyes filled with tears. She saw that she would only do harm by resisting, and so she obeyed, but not without glancing back at René, who wore a sorry look. The Englishwoman also obeyed, but with a stiff and offended air, which would have made the young count smile had he been less anxious. The general's face

was stormy, and it was evidently a bad moment to try and move him. So the young count made up his mind to wait for a better opportunity, and to get out of the scrape as best he could.

His uncle did not wait for him to explain matters. "Will you be good enough, sir, to tell me what you were saying to my daughter?" he curtly asked. "Why was the word marriage made use of while I was asleep?"

"It was made use of by Miss Betsy, uncle," said René with embarrassment.

"If Miss Betsy's sentimental outbursts were alone in question, it would not matter. I am used to them, and I take them for what they are worth. But I saw that Antoinette was confused when I addressed a very simple question to her. You also are confused, and I wish to know why."

"I assure you, uncle, that you are wrong."

"You reply like a schoolboy caught in mischief. Your manner confirms my suspicions, and I beg you once more to tell me what has taken place between my daughter and yourself?"

"Nothing, uncle, nothing whatever, I assure you. We were speaking of unimportant subjects, and finally of marriage, whereupon Miss Tufton took part in the conversation. I came to see you, just as I usually do."

"You don't usually come at this hour, it seems to me. You ought to be at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. You don't mean to tell me, I presume, that the Ile Saint-Louis is on your road when you are going from the Rue d'Artois to the Boulevard des Capucines?"

"The Under-Secretary of State, Monsieur de Rayneval, gave me leave of absence this morning. You know that I belong to his department?"

"If he gave you leave it must have been because you asked for it. And you make use of it to come here before noon! It is clear that you have something to ask of me."

"No, uncle,—I—I had business in this neighbourhood, and as I was passing by the house, I—"

The general curtailed his nephew's confused explanation with an authoritative gesture. "Listen to me, sir," said he. "You are trying to hide the true reason of your visit, and you make such poor excuses that you don't deceive me at all. However I don't make myself understood, it seems. Well, I will be plain, and I wish that in your turn you should be frank with me. I wish to tell you that if you have any expectations as regards my daughter—"

"Expectations as regards my cousin!" exclaimed René, amazed.

"Don't pretend to be astonished. There would be nothing extraordinary in your having thought of her. I will even say that I should not be offended at it. You are a nobleman and a Brouage. You might aspire to Antoinette. But I declare to you that you shall not marry her."

"And I declare to you, uncle, that I had never thought of marrying my cousin," replied the young count, angrily, "and I am sure that I have not acted in a manner to allow it to be supposed that I aspired to her hand."

"That is true," replied the marquis, somewhat mollified. "I know very well that Antoinette has never acted in a manner to cause remark. But she is young, she is excitable, and Miss Tufton encourages her in a kind of sentimentality; she sees you very often, and it is scarcely possible that she should not be attracted by you; you see how frank I am. Besides, I have learnt that some of my friends speak favourably of certain projects. I have heard, on several occasions, that a marriage which would perpetuate my name, threatened with extinction since I have had the misfortune to lose

my son, would be a very sensible affair. I have been told that the King would hand down the peerage to Count René de Brouage if he became my son-in-law."

"Really, uncle, you astonish me! Who can have—"

"Everybody meddles in the matter, even my steward. It is a perfect conspiracy."

René remembered the gabble of old Pierre Dugué and his air of mystery, and he realised that the Chouan had been vainly endeavouring to make him understand all this when he was escorting him to the drawing-room. However, he now spoke with an accent of truth which made a lively impression upon his uncle. "I thank you," he said, "for opening my eyes, and I now understand why you have resolved to put an end to a situation unworthy both of you and of me. But I must once more declare, and this time upon my word of honour, that I have never courted my cousin."

"I believe you, René," replied the general. "You are incapable of falsehood, and I did wrong to suspect you. But I don't regret having spoken openly to you. It was necessary, in my daughter's interest, that I should know your feelings. You might have fallen in love with one another, and I have other views as regards Antoinette. It is, therefore, better to forestall any affection which might have arisen between you, and which would have made both of you unhappy. And as for my name," added the general, drawing himself up, "I am not yet too old to marry."

This somewhat unexpected declaration surprised René, but he was entirely indifferent as to his uncle's marrying or not, providing he would only allow him to do so himself. It now occurred to him that the opportunity might possibly be a good one for risking his perilous avowal. To tell the general that he wished to marry Octavie de Saint-Hélier would plainly prove that he did not wish to marry Antoinette de Brouage.

"Let us say no more on the matter, my dear René," concluded the marquis, "and the devil fly away with Miss Betsy, with her ridiculous speeches about the communion of hearts. What hearts was she talking about? Not her own, I presume?"

"If I told you, uncle," said the young count, timidly, "what we were talking about just now, my cousin and I, you would see at once that I have not, and could not have, the intentions of which I have been accused."

"Ah! sir," said the marquis, "so you are now going to confess. I am quite disposed to listen indulgently. Come, what were you saying to Antoinette?"

"I was talking about a marriage," replied René, who had suddenly made up his mind to pass the Rubicon.

"Then I heard rightly? Whose marriage, if you please? I return to the question which I asked when I awoke."

"My marriage, uncle."

"Your marriage?" repeated the general with a frown; "but you swore just now upon your honour that—"

"That I did not aspire to the honour of becoming your son-in-law. I swear it once more, and you will not doubt my word when I tell you that I love another young girl, and that the aim of my visit is to ask you—"

"That is why you have been looking so strangely ever since you came in. You want my consent?"

"I beg of you, uncle, not to refuse it."

"It is all the more meritorious on your part to ask for it, as you might do without it. You are of age, free to do as you please; and, besides, I

am not your father, and if I were you might still do without my permission, as the pretty code by which we now regulate our affairs has suppressed paternal authority. At the present time, children can marry against their parents' will, and the latter have no longer any right to disinherit their offspring. It is sufficient to send one's father a paper drawn up by a notary. And that is called a *respectful* notice! A strange way of showing respect, and no mistake!"

"Believe me, uncle, I disapprove as much as you do of these democratic innovations. I consider it a duty to consult you before I marry, for I owe you everything, and I have the liveliest and most respectful affection for you."

"And I return it, my dear René," replied the general, holding out his hand to his nephew. "Don't be offended at what I said to you just now about Antoinette. You are assuredly worthy of her, but I have a strong prejudice against marriages between first cousins. Besides, you cannot have any grudge against me on that account, as you have other plans which you might have told me of sooner."

"I did not venture to do so after the misfortune which has fallen upon us all. I still hesitated to-day, and it was my cousin who, with her usual kindness, encouraged me to speak."

"Indeed!" said M. de Brouage, somewhat surprised; "how did you come to tell her of your affair? Such things are not usually confided to young girls."

"My cousin remarked that I was anxious. She asked me why, and pressed me with questions."

"I'll venture to say that Miss Tufton did the same. And I can understand that between two women, one of them a prying old maid, you could not keep your secret."

"I resisted at first, but I ended by confessing that I had come to ask your permission to marry. Then my cousin said—I ought not to betray her—but she said that she would plead my cause with you, that you would listen to her, and that she would win your consent."

"Pretty promises for a little girl to make!" exclaimed the marquis, laughing. And his face, which had still looked somewhat surly, now expressed perfect satisfaction. "Well, my boy," he continued, "Antoinette did not promise too much in saying that I would not oppose your happiness. Your happiness is at stake, is it not? It always is *before* marriage."

"I will admit, uncle, that I should be in utter despair if I had to renounce this project."

"Lovers always talk like that, and you are in love, of course."

"Madly."

"I hope, however, that you will not lose your head; and I will remark, by-the-bye, that although you now so deferentially consult me, you took care not to do so before engaging yourself. Oh! I don't reproach you. When I was a sub-lieutenant I did not ask my colonel's permission to fall in love. Besides, I am sure that you have made a good choice. You are too high minded to choose badly. Did you tell Antoinette the lady's name?"

"No, uncle, I wished to tell it to you first. Besides, my cousin did not ask me."

"She was right. It would have been improper for her to meddle with your love affairs. But I, who am not a young lady, and can listen to anything, I must ask you some questions."

"I am ready to reply to you, uncle," said René, who saw the critical moment approach when he would be obliged to enter into full particulars.

"In the first place, and before everything else," resumed the general, with a serious air, "I hope that you are not thinking of lowering yourself by marrying the daughter of some millionaire merchant. You would not, I am aware of it, be the first who has let himself down in that way. It was formerly admitted, and it was called, 'manuring one's land.' But merchants in former days were not revolutionists, and now they are all liberals, which amounts to the same thing."

"The father of the young lady I love is a nobleman."

"That is enough. Is he rich?"

"I don't know the amount of his fortune, but I feel sure that it is much larger than mine."

"Has the young girl any brothers or sisters!"

"She is an only daughter."

"That is good! Is she well bred? But that is a matter of course."

"She would not be out of place in any court of Europe."

"Well, then, we will make an ambassadress of her later in the day, and in the meantime I will ask the Duc de Richelieu, the President of the Council, and Baron Pasquier, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to attach you soon to some good German legation. An intelligent Frenchwoman is always a valuable auxiliary in diplomatic circles, and I am sure that the future Countess de Brouage is intelligent."

"She has remarkable intellectual attainments."

"Pretty?"

"Adorable!"

"Adorable is a vague expression," said the marquis, with a smile.

"That is a lover's word. Is she short or tall, a blonde or a brunette? What is her style of beauty? Tell me all about her, my dear René; I know all about beauty, and you will describe her so well that you will make me feel quite young again, I'm sure of it."

"She is tall and slender, with admirable shoulders and arms; magnificent eyes, full of fire, and hair like that of the Titian's mistress—the picture at the Louvre."

"Has she a pretty hand?" asked the general, who grew quite animated in listening to this description of Octavie's charms.

"Almost as handsome a hand as my cousin's."

"And her foot?"

"Her foot is as handsome as that of Madame de Berry's."

"How are her ears?—how are her teeth?"

"Her ears are like shells, and her teeth are pearls."

"But then she must be Venus herself! She must be the eighth wonder of the world! Upon my word, sir, you are a lucky fellow! Birth, fortune, beauty—everything! I understand, now, why you did not wait for my permission to fall in love. And she loves you, I presume?"

"We have exchanged vows, and we are engaged to one another," said René, looking down.

"You have said that very nicely! I wish that Miss Tufton had been here to hear you. She would be overcome with delight. But let us speak seriously. Has her father consented? Have you made your formal proposals?"

"Not yet, uncle. I did not wish to do so without letting you know. But I am certain of being well received."

"Then you intend to be married soon?"

"Not till my mourning can be laid aside."

"That is very kind on your part, René, very kind indeed," exclaimed the general, touched by this reply. "I approve of your project, and if the death of my poor Henri had not been so recent, I would myself go to ask for the hand of the charming girl whom you wish to marry; I should be proud to give her my arm to the altar. I may, at all events, receive her father, and express to him all the interest and affection which I feel as regards you. Antoinette, too, will be very happy to become acquainted with her new cousin. It is decided then. You have my consent. You need only tell me the name of the young lady to whom you are engaged."

René's heart sank. The more easily the marquis had given in, so long as nothing but the beauty of his future niece had been talked of, the more the lover now dreaded an explosion. But there was no more possibility of drawing back. "Her name," he replied in a husky voice, "is Mademoiselle Octavie de Saint-Héliér."

"Saint-Héliér?" repeated the general, "it seems to me that I have heard that name before."

"Her father," added René, timidly, "the Chevalier de Saint-Héliér, emigrated at the beginning of the Revolution, and while he was abroad was often charged by the princes with private missions."

"It's strange! I know almost all the French nobility, and I did not know that there was any family named Saint-Héliér. Who is this chevalier? With whom does he associate?"

"He lives on his money, and entertains very select company at his house."

"Where does he live?"

"On the Place Royale, in a house belonging to him."

"On the Place Royale!" exclaimed M. De Brouage. "Didn't Henri go with you to the door there on the night when—"

René hung his head, and did not reply.

"You recall a painful remembrance, sir," said the general, gloomily.

"I am surprised that this remembrance did not make Monsieur de Saint-Héliér's house repugnant to you forever."

The young count muttered a few indistinct words which his uncle did not heed, for he had begun to walk up and down the room, as was his habit whenever he was worried by gloomy thoughts. However he suddenly stopped in front of René, and looking angrily at him, exclaimed: "My memory has returned, sir. I know now who mentioned this man to me. It was the detective whom the Prefect of Police charged with finding the murderer of my son, and I remember perfectly well that he boasted of being a friend of your chevalier."

"He lied!" exclaimed René.

"No, for he was at this Saint-Héliér's house on that fatal night. And you wish to marry the daughter of a sham nobleman, a thorough rascal? You dare to ask me, the head of your house, to consent to such a marriage? It is not enough to degrade your own name, but you must disgrace me, by mixing me up with the low intrigue into which your passions have brought you!"

"Uncle, I protest in the name of my respect for you, I—"

"Hold your tongue, sir! I am willing to forgive an offence of which you did not, I am willing to believe, understand the importance. But only on condition that you will at once give me your word of honour that you

will renounce this unworthy project, never again set foot in the house of this adventurer, and cease all acquaintance with his daughter. You seem to hesitate ? ”

“ I do not hesitate, uncle, I refuse,” replied René, pale with rage and shame. “ It is impossible for me to obey you ! ”

“ Ah, is that so ? You brave me, sir. Very well ! I know what it is my duty to do. I will prevent you from dragging the name of Brouage through the mud. An adventuress shall never bear it. There is someone in Paris who will undertake to manage Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier and her respectable father. I will go myself to the Ministry of the Interior. I will see the Director-General of the police service, and I will ask him to send them both to the proper place for adventurers and adventuresses ! ”

“ Uncle you won't do such a thing as that ! ” exclaimed the young count, in exasperation. “ You must not do it, or I—”

“ Take care, sir ? You are about to say something disrespectful ! ” exclaimed the general, crossing his arms upon his breast.

René, who had advanced with a threatening air, stopped short, and when his uncle said to him, in an icy tone, “ Go ! ” he made a gesture of despair, and rushed from the room.

At the very moment when he disappeared, Mademoiselle de Brouage came in, attracted by the loud sound of her father's voice and the noise made by the door, which the count slammed behind him as he darted out on to the landing. Antoinette was pale and trembling when she emerged from the little drawing-room where the marquis had sent her. Miss Elizabeth Tufton, who followed her, also looked greatly disturbed.

“ What do you want here ? ” cried the general. “ I did not call either of you. Go away, both ! ”

“ But you are ill, father ! ” exclaimed Antoinette, approaching him. “ I cannot leave you in this state.”

“ I do not need your attentions.”

“ You send me away, then ? ”

“ No ; but this scene has put me into a perfect rage, and your presence will not quiet me : on the contrary. Besides, I must go out.”

“ What scene do you mean ? ” asked the girl, anxiously. “ What has taken place between you and René ? ”

“ René ! René ! You will oblige me by never uttering that name before me.”

Mademoiselle de Brouage staggered back. She was wounded to the heart.

“ You are surprised ? Really ? It is I who ought to be surprised at hearing you plead your cousin's cause to me.”

Antoinette made an effort at self-command, and said in a faint voice : “ You don't know, father—you cannot know—René told me everything.”

“ And after hearing him, you still take his part ? ”

“ Why not ? ”

“ Really this is too much, and this is the consequence of the training given to girls nowadays.”

“ Monsieur le Marquis,” said Miss Betsy, gravely, “ it is I who, with your authorisation, have trained Mademoiselle de Brouage. I belong to a noble family—to a family whose name figures in the peerage of Great Britain—and I am sure I have only inculcated such principles as befit my dear Antoinette's descent.”

“ I was not talking to you,” replied the general, so angry as to forget

his usual politeness. "And you, less than any one, ought to uphold my daughter, for it is you who have put all this nonsense about love matches into her head."

"Nonsense?" repeated the Englishwoman, angrily.

"Yes, mademoiselle, I repeat the word. When people are not of a good family they can marry as they please, but when they bear my name they have no right to let themselves obey mad passions. A name is an inheritance, and it is a duty to keep it unstained."

"You speak of our name, father. What have I done to soil the name of our family?" now asked Mademoiselle de Brouage.

The poor child did not suspect anything of what had occurred. She still believed that René had proposed for her hand, and that the general's anger was simply caused by the young count's audacity in daring to court the daughter of a peer of France worth two or three millions of francs when he himself was merely a penniless nobleman, without a position. And the marquis understood the situation as little as Antoinette did, for he felt sure that she knew her cousin's real intentions.

"You have done so by listening to a scandalous project," he said, impatiently.

"Scandalous!" murmured the young girl. "Does not René bear our name?"

"And it is precisely because of that that I have forbidden him to lower himself by a misalliance."

"I—I do not understand you, father."

"What! don't you understand that a Brouage cannot marry any woman who is not his equal by birth?"

"Just as I cannot marry any but a man of good family. I know that, and I thank Heaven that René should have thought of marrying me!"

"You! if he had thought of you I would soon drive such a wild idea from his head; but at least I should not blush for him. However, he tries to cover me with ridicule by marrying the daughter of some scamp who pretends to be a nobleman, an adventuress—"

Mademoiselle de Brouage closed her eyes, and in order to prevent herself from falling, she was obliged to lean against the table on which she had left the sketch of her brother's miniature. "And so," she murmured, "it was not my hand that he asked of you?"

"No, and it is well he didn't, for I should have refused it. He had no thought of asking it. He is madly in love with that creature. But what ails you, Antoinette? You turn pale?"

"You have killed her, marquis," said Miss Elizabeth Tufton, in a tragic tone.

"Good heavens! she is fainting! Antoinette, my child! what ails you? What have I said to make you turn ill like this?" exclaimed the general, rushing forward to catch his daughter in his arms.

"I love him!" murmured poor Antoinette.

"You love him! you love this— Ah! madman that I am, I did not guess it! That is why you promised to join your entreaties to his, and he did not guess it either; he is greatly to blame for the pain that I have given you."

"He does not love me, he loves another," sighed Mademoiselle de Brouage, "it will kill me!"

"Kill you? No, you shall not die! rather than you should despair, I would consent to—"

"What good would that do? He does not love me. He was thinking of another when he spoke to me, and his voice trembled, and his eyes were full of tears."

"Men are shameless creatures," put in Miss Betsy, raising her hand to Heaven, as if to call upon it to testify to the rascalities of the uglier portion of the human race.

"Yes," said the marquis, angrily, "it was most unworthy of him. I was irritated against him, and now I feel quite outraged at his conduct."

"Forgive him, father! He did not know that he would give me so much pain. I never told him that I loved him, and he could not guess it, for his heart was given to this woman."

"Do not try to excuse him. His conduct is unpardonable. And he shall be punished as he deserves. The unfortunate fellow has become infatuated with an adventuress of the worst kind. I will take proper measures against this siren. And this very evening I shall be able to tell you— But what is it?" asked M. de Brouage, breaking off to speak to Pierre Dugué, who had opened the door, and was softly approaching his master, saying that he thought he had been rung for.

He had evidently watched for the young count to reappear. But René was not the kind of man to confide his troubles to him, and the old Chouan had seen by his face that the interview had been a stormy one, and was dying to find out all about it. The general and his daughter were thus subjected to one of the most painful necessities laid upon the rich and great by reason of their high position. They were obliged to restrain themselves before their servant, who was devoted to them, no doubt, but who must not hear or know what had taken place. Antoinette bore up against her grief and restrained her tears. M. de Brouage concealed his emotion, and in a sharp tone said to Dugué: "I didn't want you. Tell Taupin to have the cabriolet got ready. I will drive myself."

"I will do so at once, Monsieur le Marquis, but Justine also sent me to say that Mademoiselle de Monville and Mademoiselle de Rully have called to see Mademoiselle Antoinette."

"Go and receive your friends, my love," said the general, delighted at being able to spare himself a painful scene.

The visitors whom Pierre Dugué announced were the daughters of two peers, girls who had been at the convent with Antoinette, who was very fond of them. Mademoiselle de Brouage did not venture to disobey her father. What could she reply, and of what use would it have been to defend a lost cause? She held up her face to the general who kissed her upon the forehead, and then she went out leaning upon Miss Betsy's arm, the latter putting on a stiff air in her vexation at the bluntness with which the general had treated her.

The old Chouan also had disappeared, and M. de Brouage found himself alone in the vast apartment filled with portraits and relics. There were some twenty pictures signed by old masters, and representing the Brouages of the last three centuries—men in armour or in court-attire, women in full toilet with high head-dresses, rouged cheeks, and smiling lips. Some grave councillors in robes bordered with ermine, also figured in this gallery of family portraits, showing that the general's feminine ancestors had sometimes deigned to marry men of the gown, although the family had mainly comprised men of the sword. The terrible general did not ask these pictures for advice any more than he would have done had the magnates they portrayed been alive and aware of the trying position in which his

nephew had placed him. He had been deeply affected by Antoinette's grief, but it had not altered his resolve. He did not wish to give his daughter to René; but he did not wish René to marry Saint-Hélier's daughter; and he had made up his mind to do everything in his power to prevent the marriage, even if he had to go to the chevalier and the fair Octavie, and tell them his opinion of them.

In order to act efficaciously, he must be prompt, for he was well aware that the young count might do something rash. So he took his hat, buttoned up his military-cut coat—a garment such as Napoleon's whilom officers were in the habit of wearing, and not at all like that adopted by royalists, and especially royalists of high degree; and then he went quickly down the stairs. His cabriolet was ready at the door, for Jean Taupin was a quick fellow, and ordered the grooms about much in the same fashion as he had formerly ordered the dragoons in his squadron.

M. de Brouage sprung on the seat of the cabriolet as lightly as though he had been a young man, and the feat was no small one, as the seat was fully six feet from the ground, took the reins from the hands of a footman, who, like Miss Betsy, had been imported from England, and whipped up his horse, which started off at full speed.

VII.

THE marquis drove straight to the Ministry of the Interior to obtain some information as to Octavie's father from one of his colleagues in the Chamber of Peers, who then held the important post of Director-General of the Police of the realm. The director-general was the superior of the Prefect of Police, and his functions were entirely political.

In 1821, these functions had devolved to one of the most remarkable men that the empire had bequeathed to the Restoration, a man whom the King, as a reward for long and important services, had raised to the peerage, at the same time as General de Brouage.

The two new peers had long been acquainted. Baron Mounier, Councillor of State, had governed Silesia under Napoleon, while the colonel of the 9th Dragoons was fighting there at the head of his regiment.

It is needless to say that the director-general did not make a nobleman, his friend, wait in the ante-room. The marquis was, in fact, received at once, and without any preamble he tackled the subject he had at heart.

"My dear baron," said he, "I have come to ask you for some information of a somewhat delicate nature. Can you tell me the real position of an individual who lives on the Place Royale, and calls himself the Chevalier de Saint-Hélier?"

The functionary looked somewhat surprised at this question, for which he was entirely unprepared. However, he answered with the most natural air imaginable: "My dear general, I believe that Monsieur de Saint-Hélier is what he appears to be. I have no personal relations with him, but I know that he emigrated, that he served the princes during the emigration, and that he now lives here in handsome style."

"Are you sure that he has a right to the title of chevalier?"

"No one is ever sure of such things as those," replied the baron with a shrewd smile.

"And is he really of noble birth?" resumed the general.

"As to his nobility, my dear colleague, you are better able to judge of

that than I am. I have never studied Chérin or D'Hozier, and I am not familiar with heraldry, but you—"

"You are right. It would be easy for me to find out whether he is noble or not. But I ask your opinion as to his honourability."

"I have never heard that it was in question."

This evasive answer did not satisfy M. de Brouage, who immediately resolved to set to work in another way. "Well, I think the contrary," said he. "Do you know a certain Loquetières, my dear baron?"

"Oh, that is quite a different sort of man," said the director-general at once. "He is one of our secret agents, a very upright and skilful fellow; but for all that he is a spy."

"On that point, my dear baron, I entirely agree with you. This man Loquetières is a spy. I know that from good authority, for it was he who was selected by the Prefect of Police to try to discover the murderer of my unfortunate son."

"True, and I am surprised that Loquetières hasn't succeeded, for he is very able. We only employ him in matters relating to politics, and he has rendered great services to the government. It was he who, in 1816, discovered the conspiracy of the Black Pin. And so, my dear colleague, you have come to ask me for some information as to this man?"

"No. I am not thinking of him, but his name reminds me of the object of my visit, and I return to that. Your man Loquetières is very intimate—he so stated in my presence—with the Chevalier de Saint-Héliér. 'Birds of a feather flock together,' says the proverb. So it is impossible that the friend of a police-spy can be anything else than a suspicious character."

"Your logic is too positive, my dear general, especially in this case. In the first place, Loquetières, as you may have noticed—since you know him—is a man of good breeding. He is a spy of the old school, of the kind who pride themselves upon keeping up the traditions of the whilom lieutenants of police. To my knowledge, he has been entrusted with several secret missions in foreign parts, which he fulfilled with complete success. He was sent to me at Weimar, where I was head commissary in 1808, at the time the sovereigns met at Erfurt. He was received everywhere, and no one took him for what he really was. I even remember that one evening at the theatre, where there was a pitful of kings, the Emperor Alexander of Russia spoke to him in that gracious manner, for which he was noted. Saint-Héliér, who must have met Loquetières in Germany, may easily have been deceived as to the social position of a man whom the czar himself took for an official personage."

"Then this spy served the Empire?" asked M. de Brouage, struck by the justice of this reasoning.

"Quite so. Who did not serve the Empire more or less?" asked the ex-auditor of Napoleon's state council with a smile.

"And Saint-Héliér served it also, I presume?"

"I don't think so. All that I can affirm is that he never held any public position under any government."

"But, dash it all, what is his real position? What does he do?"

"Nothing, that I know of. He probably has some little fortune and uses it intelligently. He gives entertainments at which artists and men of letters meet. It isn't at all surprising that Loquetières, who goes everywhere, should visit him. Besides, the chevalier is very well thought of as to his political opinions. He is a quiet and moderate royalist, who keeps at an equal distance from the liberals and the ultras."

"And at an equal distance, too, from cut-throats and people of birth; for he is not received in really good society. I have never met him anywhere. If he were a nobleman, as he pretends, I should at least have heard his name mentioned in some drawing-rooms."

"I repeat to you, my dear general, that I do not guarantee his being noble; but if any people have given you bad information about him, they have no doubt exaggerated. Saint-Hélier's ancestors were probably not at the Crusades. I don't find fault with him on that account, however; mine were not there either. But I can certify that he has served the King."

"If you certify that, baron, it is because you know the man well and better than it suits you to say, and I am inclined to believe that he is one of your subordinates."

"I understand. You think that he belongs to the police, like that fellow Loquetières. Well, then, my dear colleague, you are mistaken."

"That is enough. I do not doubt your word," replied M. de Brouage, only partly satisfied with this ambiguous reply. "One word more. This chevalier, or so-called chevalier has a daughter—"

"Who is a marvel of beauty and grace, and wit. I saw her last year at the ball at the Hôtel de Ville. She dazzled me. She is a woman fitted by nature to be a queen, and I should not be surprised if she fascinated a prince, or some banker with millions of money."

"She is not married, then?"

"No. It is astonishing, is it not? But we live in times when money is everything, and Saint-Hélier, who has a very good income, does not possess, I fancy, sufficient capital to give his daughter a large dowry."

"How does this wonder behave herself?"

"Why—as a well-bred young lady should behave. I do not believe that anything has ever been said against her reputation. She even passes for being proud and haughty to those who court her. And Heaven knows that she does not lack admirers. At the ball where I met her, all the young men of fashion contended for the pleasure of dancing with her. I believe that there were two or three duels on the following day, on account of her promising to dance with some, and then dancing with others instead."

"In a word, my dear baron," said the Marquis de Brouage, somewhat impatiently, "in your opinion both father and daughter are irreproachable?"

The Director-General of the Police did not at once answer this formal question. He gave his noble colleague a keen glance, and was evidently anxious to find out the aim of the strange questions which M. de Brouage was asking of him. "Allow me, general," said he, after a somewhat lengthy pause, "to inquire of you what interest you have in obtaining information with regard to Monsieur and Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier?"

"You remind me that I ought to have begun by telling you for what reason I came here. I have no motive for concealing it from you. A marriage is in question."

"A marriage with the chevalier's daughter?"

"Exactly."

"You know some one who intends to ask for Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier's hand?"

"Yes."

The baron still hesitated, and then said with a somewhat embarrassed air: "May I ask in what matter you are interested in the—the young man, for I presume that it is a young man?"

"He is not twenty-five."

"The young lady cannot be more than twenty. So as regards age, it would be a very suitable match."

"And in other respects?"

"That depends upon the social position of the suitor. If, for instance, he is a young fellow of the middle-classes desirous of making his way—"

"He is my nephew."

"Your nephew!" exclaimed the baron, starting from his arm-chair; "the one who has plunged into liberalism?"

"No. I don't trouble my head about him; he may marry whomsoever he pleases: I shall not trouble him. It is the elder brother who aspires to the hand of Mademoiselle de Saint Héliér—Count René de Brouage, the heir to my peerage, if I die without male heirs, and if the King sees fit to let the honour which he has bestowed upon me, descend in a collateral line."

"Then, my dear general," said the director, who had assumed a grave air, "I feel it to be my duty, since you have done me the honour to consult me, to advise you to prevent this marriage, or, at all events, not to give your consent to it."

"My consent has been asked for, and I have just refused it; but my nephew will do without it. In former times I should simply have gone to the Emperor and have asked him to send my nephew to reflect for six months in the keep at Vincennes. But now we have the charter, newspapers, and liberals, and all that kind of thing. No one heeds authority, and everyone has a perfect right to commit all sorts of folly. If you know any way of preventing the scandal which is imminent, I should be greatly obliged to you if you will tell me what it is."

"Unfortunately, I don't know of any. Count René is of age, and according to the Civil Code, he—"

"It is not as regards him that I solicit your intervention. But couldn't you, baron, have an order of expulsion made out against the father and daughter, and oblige them to leave the kingdom?"

"You cannot suppose such a thing, my dear general!" replied the director, suppressing a smile. "Such measures are only resorted to with foreigners. Now, the chevalier—"

"Is French, to our country's shame. But he is a low adventurer."

"I do not say that."

"And his daughter is an adventuress."

"I did not say that either, and as regards Mademoiselle de Saint-Héliér, I declare to you, my dear colleague, that you are entirely wrong. She has never been talked about, and her dazzling beauty has made her so conspicuous that if she had ever carried on any questionable intrigue, all Paris would know about it."

"I will admit, then, that she may have avoided compromising herself, although she has misled my fool of a nephew. But the father, this sham chevalier, who, under the appearance of a regular life, is hiding an equivocal past—"

"I have the honour to repeat to you, general, that I never said anything of the kind."

"No, but you have just declared to me that René would disgrace himself by making this man's daughter the Countess de Brouage."

"Excuse me, my dear colleague, I simply gave you my opinion, which is that this marriage would not be a good one for the nephew of a peer of France."

"That amounts to the same as saying that Saint-Hélîer is a rascal."

"Not at all. This marriage may not be suitable for the Count de Brouage, and yet be entirely so for someone standing less high in society through his birth and position. The count bears an illustrious name; he is, or will be, attached to some embassy; he may be sent some day to represent the King at a foreign court. He ought, it seems to me, to try and find a wife of rank equal to his own. However, many young men would think themselves only too happy, in marrying the chevalier's daughter."

"I am sure of that, especially if she is really as handsome as you state, and I will say no more, my dear baron. I very well understand that your position obliges you to be very careful, and that you are not called upon to tell me all that you know concerning Monsieur de Saint-Hélîer. I even thank you for not having refused to tell me your view of the matter when I asked for it. You cannot do more than you have done. It is now for me to find out a way to prevent this shameful marriage, and I shall go to the father, and, if need be, to the daughter—"

"What! you will do that? They certainly don't expect a visit from you."

"In half an hour I shall be there. They live on the Place Royale."

"Yes, at number ten, if I remember rightly."

"I see that you know the chevalier very well."

"Everybody knows him! May I ask, my dear general, what you mean to say to him?"

"I am going to tell him that if he does not close his doors to my nephew, I will cut off his ears."

"Poor Saint-Hélîer! you will frighten him to death! And what will you say to his daughter?"

"I shall speak to her in another way, but I shall be quite as plain."

"Take care, general," said the baron, with a laugh. "It is said that none can resist her."

"My dear sir," replied M. de Brouage, "I am not a raw recruit, like my nephew. I first stood fire long ago, and I am no more afraid of a pair of fine eyes, than I am of a Russian battery. So don't alarm yourself on my account, and allow me to take my leave."

The two colleagues shook hands, English fashion, and the official went to the door of his study with the general, who walked hastily across the ante-room, reached the Rue de Grenelle, and sprang into his cabriolet.

He longed to end matters with the persons who were troubling his peace of mind, and his interview with the baron had not changed his opinion as to Saint-Hélîer. The Director-General of the police service evidently knew the chevalier better than he was willing to admit, and if he said nothing damaging about him, it was because the chevalier rendered him secret services. But amid all the baron's reticence, M. de Brouage had guessed that he had but little esteem for Saint-Hélîer, so he, the general, made up his mind to attack him with scant ceremony. There was nothing of the parliamentarian in his determination, but with M. de Brouage, the colonel of dragoons often got the better of the peer of France; in fact he never adopted mild measures.

The trotter harnessed to the cabriolet took M. de Brouage, in twenty minutes, to the door of the fatal house where René had lost his heart. The general raised his eyes as he stopped his horse, and he fancied that he espied a woman's face behind a window on the first floor.

"This house is handsome," he said to himself as he threw the reins to the groom. "The scamp is lodged like a lord. But that won't prevent me from telling him what I think of him. He doesn't expect the shower-bath I have in store for him, unless, indeed, my good-for-nothing nephew has forestalled me. René is quite capable of that. I saw a woman just now at the window. Perhaps it was his beauty, whom he has placed there as a sentinel. Well, so much the worse for her, if she has to take the first shots. I sha'n't mince matters with the daughter any more than with the father."

While crossing the arcade which surrounds the old Place Royale, M. de Brouage suddenly recalled the fact that his unfortunate son had stood upon the same flagstones that he now trod upon, when leaving René on the night that he was killed. This remembrance served but to increase the general's anger. The carriage-entrance was open. So he darted into the vestibule, where he found an old servant, with a venerable countenance, one of those men who were formerly handed down from father to son in good families.

"Is Monsieur de Saint-Héliér at home?" the general asked abruptly of the worthy old retainer.

"Monsieur le Chevalier must be in his study," replied the doorkeeper, bowing to the ground, "and if Monsieur le Marquis will take the trouble to go up—"

"You know who I am, then?"

"Who does not know the Marquis de Brouage, peer of France, lieutenant-general, knight of the King's orders, and commander of—"

"Enough!" said M. de Brouage, leaving the old fellow to continue his bowing and scraping, and running upstairs. And on his way he reflected: "How did that fellow know who I am? I wasn't mistaken, my nephew has been here; I was expected. So much the better! That will save me the trouble of saying why I have come. I shall go direct to my aim, and we shall have a storm."

On the first floor the general found a valet, a middle-aged man, who asked his name. This fellow looked mysterious; he was dressed in black, and spoke in a low tone.

"Go and tell your master that the uncle of Monsieur René de Brouage wishes to speak to him at once," said the ex-colonel of dragoons in a tone of command.

"If you will be good enough to follow me, sir," replied the obsequious servant, "you will find the chevalier in his study."

"They all repeat the same thing," muttered M. de Brouage as he crossed an imposing ante-room. "Why has this plebeian a study, and what makes his servants look so mysterious? One would think that I was calling upon a bishop."

He soon reached a door, behind which two persons could be heard talking loudly. The sound of their voices was distinctly audible, that of a woman alternating with that of a man.

"Saint-Héliér is, no doubt, having a quarrel on the subject with his daughter," thought the general. "I have come at the right time. I shall hit two birds with one stone. So much the better."

The valet knocked softly, opened the door without waiting for a reply, and quietly announced: "The Marquis de Brouage." And thereupon he retired on tiptoe.

"Again!" said the general to himself; "this verger in livery knows

that René's uncle is a marquis. Yes, yes, my visit must have been expected."

What the intrepid soldier on his side did not expect, was the impression he experienced when he beheld Octavie de Saint-Hélér. She was standing near the window where he had caught a glimpse of her on alighting from his cabriolet, and the full light of a fine May morning fell upon her in a way that allowed one to admire her to heart's content; and the general, who was a connoisseur, could see at a glance that she was a feminine masterpiece. Octavie was attired in a tight-fitting dress of white muslin, with a girdle at her waist. The cut was such as to show all the outlines of her form, and low enough to display her shoulders. Her hair was not dressed in the so-called Etruscan style, and she wore neither net nor turban. Her tresses fell upon her neck in rich coils, and formed above her brow a diadem of brown gold.

The general stepped back dazzled, looking like a man who has come from darkness into a sudden blaze of light. But his eyes soon encountered those of Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélér, which were sparkling brilliantly. She was evidently in a state of violent anger. Her lips were parted, as though she had just uttered some bitter words, her dilated nostrils indicated intense scorn, and irritation had made the blood mount to her cheeks.

"That scamp of a René did not exaggerate," thought the general. "She is simply superb. But who has made her look like an angry goddess?"

He glanced to the left, and saw a face which did not at all please him. It was that of a young man of two or three and twenty, not very tall, but well built, thin, muscular, and dark like a Spaniard.

This young man had a pointed head, a narrow sharp face, a prominent aquiline nose, bushy hair, black eyes like jet in colour, and as fiery as burning coals, white pointed teeth, and a restless anxious air. He made the worst possible impression upon M. de Brouage, whom he looked at with singular persistency.

It was evidently this young fellow who had enraged Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélér; it was also evident that he was on a footing of intimacy in the house, for he had no gloves on, and his hat was not in his hand. He appeared to have left it in the ante-room.

"That is a fellow I should like to thrash, to teach him not to stare me out of countenance," thought the general. "And this creature who receives him alone and quarrels with him, doesn't deserve to be treated with any great amount of respect. My nephew is no better than a fool with his mania for marrying her. To love her is all very well, for she is well worth that."

This mental soliloquy was speedily interrupted by Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélér. "Monsieur le Marquis," said she without the least embarrassment, "my father has just gone out. He will be extremely sorry to have missed the pleasure of seeing you."

"Mademoiselle," replied M. de Brouage, curtly, "the affair with reference to which I wished to see him does not admit of any delay, and as it concerns yourself, I should be very glad to speak to you at once, if you will be so good as to listen to me."

The general had his reasons for beginning in this way.

He wished in the first place to burn his ships and negotiate this delicate matter in true dragoon fashion. Such was his system in war and elsewhere, for he thought action better than temporizing. Finally, he was

glad to humiliate the insolent hobbledehoy who did not appear disposed to retire.

"I am ready to listen to you, Monsieur le Marquis," quietly replied Octavie, "and I am sure that my father will approve of my receiving you. Be good enough to leave us, Monsieur Marcas," she added, looking at the young man, who started, but did not move. She stepped towards him, and without removing her eyes from his face, she said in a calm tone: "Did you hear me?"

Marcas again attempted to brave the fire darting from Octavie's sparkling eyes, but at last he slowly recoiled like a wild beast conquered by the will of its tamer. Octavie, with a queenly gesture, pointed to the door, and he made up his mind to leave the room.

"The deuce!" said the general to himself; "she has trained that young savage better than I should tame a restive colt. I am not surprised that she has made my timid nephew her slave."

"I beg you to excuse me, Monsieur le Marquis," began Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier, "and to forgive that young man. He is my father's secretary. He came lately from the country, and lacks good breeding."

"He has a very bad temper, it appears to me," said M. de Brouage, who thought fit to allude to the quarrel, the noise of which he had heard through the door.

"A detestable temper, which I am trying to correct, for I have fortunately some authority over him."

"And a great deal of influence, I see."

"True, he always ends by obeying me."

"What surprises me is that he should begin by resisting you."

Instead of replying to this remark, of which she perfectly understood the double meaning, Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier pointed out an arm-chair to the general, and gracefully seated herself upon a sofa.

The chevalier's study was very elegantly furnished, and contained more works of art than papers. There was nothing to indicate the man of business in this spacious room, well lighted by two large windows which overlooked the Place Royale. Nor was there any sign of affectation in the attitude which Octavie had assumed, and yet it would have been impossible for her to assume one better calculated to display her perfections. Her shoulders escaped from her dress, which was cut low, the sleeves displaying the arms as far as the elbows. They were white, round arms ending in hands of perfect form. Her feet, childish in their proportions, were encased in pink slippers and flesh-coloured stockings, and rested nervously upon a black satin stool. Finally one of her ears, upon which a ray of the spring sun was falling, showed its delicate curves and rosy lobe. It was indeed such a pearly shell as René had spoken of to his uncle.

The general could not refrain for an instant from remarking all these charms, which the chevalier's daughter displayed without affectation, though she did not seem inclined to hide them. However, he soon recovered his self-possession and unhesitatingly opened fire. "Mademoiselle," said he, "you doubtless guess the purpose of my visit?"

"Monsieur le Marquis," replied Octavie, "I might ask you to explain it. But I prefer to say frankly that I suppose it concerns Count René de Brouage, your nephew."

"In fact it is of him that I wish to speak, mademoiselle. I should have preferred to meet your father. The interview would have been less trying between him and me. But, as you have given me permission to speak, I

am obliged to dispense with certain formalities, and to tell you without further parley what I intended to have said to Monsieur de Saint-Hélier."

The general paused for a reply. It did not come. Octavie seemed to be lost in a strange reverie. She looked with a deep and yet an absent kind of gaze at M. de Brouage; you would have said that she did not see him, but was trying to espy some absent face. She kept silent, her lovely frame remained motionless in its statuesque pose. But her foot moved, her foot spoke, and its motion very clearly expressed impatience.

This charming foot diverted the attention of M. de Brouage, and the magnetic fluid from Octavie's eyes somewhat troubled his thoughts. In fact he was already trying to find some means of acquainting her with his decision in a gentler manner than that to which he had originally intended to resort. He surely could not tell this fascinating girl point blank that her father was nothing but a sham chevalier, and she herself an adventurer. Such brutality was not possible from a nobleman.

M. de Brouage accordingly decided to change his plan of attack. "Mademoiselle," said he, "I believe that you are aware of the pecuniary situation of my nephew?"

Octavie this time replied with an astonished air; "I have never given it a thought."

"It is far from brilliant. René is poor, and the career which he has chosen will not enrich him."

Octavie made a gesture which seemed to mean, "What is that to me?"

"There has been a rumour that he would succeed to my peerage. But people are mistaken. The King would not authorize the transmission, and, indeed, I should not ask for it, for I may marry and have a direct heir."

Octavie's eyes sparkled. She reflected for a moment, and then slowly said: "I do not know why you say this to me. Do not be alarmed, Monsieur le Marquis, I shall never marry Monsieur René de Brouage."

"Are you speaking seriously, mademoiselle?" exclaimed the general, as surprised as delighted by Octavie's reply. "Have you really given up the idea of marrying my nephew?"

"I never believed in this marriage," said Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier, calmly, "and, indeed, I may confess it to you, I never desired it."

"But you engaged yourself to René."

"No," replied the chevalier's daughter, "he engaged himself to me."

"But this very morning, not more than an hour ago, he told me that everything was arranged between you, and that you had exchanged promises."

"Monsieur de Brouage was mistaken, or rather his heart deceived him."

"I confess, mademoiselle, that I no longer understand matters."

"You will easily understand, Monsieur le Marquis, if you will do me the honour to listen to me," replied Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier with marvellous coolness. "I beg of you to excuse me if I revert to a past which will interest you very little, but I am obliged to do so. If I didn't, you would not understand what I have to say. I met Monsieur de Brouage for the first time at a ball given at the Hôtel de Ville, in November last. He noticed me, and I confess that I also remarked him. He was not like most of the young men who pursue me with their attentions. His person, his manners, and his conversation all pleased me, and I was gratified when he asked to be introduced to my father, who invited him to his 'at homes.' The count came to them very often, paid me great attention, and soon told me that he loved me."

"If that had been all, the trouble would have been of small account," thought the general, whose eyes were fixed upon Octavie's foot, that fascinating little foot that was more restless than ever.

"You see how frank I am, Monsieur le Marquis," resumed Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier. "I will be still more so. This avowal of his love pleased and flattered me. I was proud of having been chosen by a nobleman bearing one of the most illustrious names in France, and I confess that if Monsieur de Bronage had then proposed to marry me, I should have been glad if my father had consented."

"I should think so indeed!" thought the general, who could scarcely refrain from smiling.

"However, he did not make a formal proposal, and I soon became aware what a difference there was between the nephew of a peer of France and the daughter of a man whose nobility was of recent date, whose fortune was small—a man without illustrious ancestors, and having no other merit than that of having faithfully served the King in exile."

"Monsieur de Saint-Hélier emigrated, I believe," said the general, eagerly seizing upon the opportunity for learning something of the mysterious chevalier.

"He left France in 1790, with the princes; he followed them to Germany and to England, especially the Count de Provence, who is now his Majesty Louis XVIII., and who, on taking possession of his kingdom, did not forget those who had been faithful to him in his misfortunes. He gave my father a large pension from his privy purse, and we are living upon his kindness now."

"Indeed," thought the general, "if this siren is telling the truth, the chevalier is a better man than I thought him, and my dear colleague, the director-general, told me very nearly the truth about him."

"There is a vast difference between the quiet though honourable situation in which fate has placed me, and that which the Count de Brouage already occupies, and especially that which awaits him," continued the girl. "I could not, therefore, feel surprised that he should reflect before marrying me, but I confess that I felt deeply wounded by his hesitation. Two months ago I thought that it was over. Monsieur de Brouage told me that he had made up his mind to ask for your consent to our marriage, and he extorted a promise from me. He would undoubtedly have kept his word, had not a painful event, which affected me as much as it did him—"

At these words the general's face clouded over, and Octavie saw that she had made a false move in recalling Count Henri's mysterious death. "Forgive me, Monsieur le Marquis," said she, in a tone of emotion, "for having unintentionally made your fatherly heart bleed. No one felt more pain than I at the blow which fell upon you. I would have given my life, Heaven is my witness, to have saved you from it."

These last words were accompanied by a look which made the general overlook their too evident exaggeration.

"The step you speak of," said he, attempting to recover his calmness, "has been taken by my nephew."

"Too late, Monsieur le Marquis. I know all. A letter which he wrote me an hour ago, and which I have just received, tells me that he spoke to you, that he did not succeed in persuading you, and that you absolutely forbade his marrying me."

"I was right," thought M. de Brouage. "She knew all about it beforehand." And he said, in a firm tone: "Mademoiselle, I regret to be ob-

ligned to act as I have done, René is my nephew. I am the head of his family, and as such I have a duty to fulfil. I know, however, that René will not pay the slightest attention to my opinion, and now that I have seen you I am no longer surprised that he should persist in his intentions."

"They will not lead to anything. I shall inform Count de Brouage this very day that I give him back his word, and resume my own liberty."

The general could not hide a gesture of surprise. He was indeed greatly astonished to hear the chevalier's daughter apparently scorn an alliance which she had evidently been very desirous of during several months, and it suddenly occurred to him that this disinterestedness and self-sacrifice were part and parcel of a scheme arranged between René and herself, to make him relax in his watchfulness. "Mademoiselle," said he, in a somewhat ironical tone, "it is not for me to plead my nephew's cause with you; but I may at least say that he will not believe in this sudden change of resolution—"

"I will undertake to explain it to him, and I can tell you the facts. A man who plays with the love he feels, who places his social interest in the same scale with his love, who hesitates before obstacles, and bargains with his heart, is not worthy of me. I am too proud to await the good pleasure of another and to bend to the exigencies of society. I wish to be loved boldly and openly. I am worth despising opinion and braving prejudice to win. On the day when the count owned to me that he was not the master of his actions, and did not feel the courage to free himself, and required time to grow bolder—on that very day, Monsieur le Marquis, I swore to myself that I would never be his wife. And I should have kept my word to myself, even if you had authorised Monsieur de Brouage to marry me."

The general was passing from astonishment to admiration. "The father of this superb creature must be noble after all," he thought, "for a woman to feel as she does, she must have good blood in her veins. What pride! what fire! what scorn! And how admirably she has fooled poor René. I should never have believed that he could be so blind. His defeat is complete, for I'll venture to say that his beauty has another lover."

"I hope, Monsieur le Marquis," resumed Octavie, who was already calm again, "that you no longer fear the result of an acquaintance which your nephew will soon forget. I also hope that you will not retain too unpleasant a recollection of me."

"No, indeed!" exclaimed the general; "I do justice to your frankness, and admire your strength of will. To renounce a first love in this fashion—"

"I do not love Count de Brouage, and I have never loved him," said Octavie, hastily.

"Then, mademoiselle, excuse an old soldier who never conceals what he thinks—but it must be because you love another."

Mademoiselle de Saint-Héliér cast down her eyes, and did not reply. One of her hands rested upon her heart, and the other toyed absently with her fan, which was placed near her on a table laden with books and engravings. The general, urged by a feeling which he, himself, did not understand, resumed, with a forced smile: "Does the young man who was with you when I came in, happen to be my nephew's happy rival?"

To address so indiscreet a question to a young girl, and so far forget, even with Mademoiselle de Saint-Héliér, his usual habits of courtesy, the general must have been in a strange state of mind. Octavie raised her

head, looked fixedly at him, and without blushing or hesitating, replied : "I thought that you judged me better. That young man is desperately in love with me, and dared to tell me so just now, but I treated him with the contempt that he deserved."

"I don't doubt it, and I congratulate you, mademoiselle," said the marquis. "The young fellow has a very repulsive face. Is he not Monsieur de Saint-Hélier's secretary?"

"Yes; my father agreed to employ him here to oblige a deputy who is one of his friends, but I shall tell him what has taken place, and Monsieur Marcas will not remain a day longer in this house."

"Marcas!" repeated the general, "what ridiculous names these Southerners have! For he must come from the South, the swarthy dwarf. How can Monsieur de Saint-Hélier employ him?"

"My father takes an interest in literature and art. He keeps up correspondence with writers in the provinces and abroad."

"Excuse me, mademoiselle," said the general, who had recovered himself, and felt somewhat confused at having thus questioned a charming woman almost as *Loquetières* might have questioned a *carbonaro*. "I am really abusing your patience, and I had forgotten that I ought to thank you and to take my leave."

"Do not thank me, marquis," said Octavie, in her warm, penetrating voice. "I have no merit in renouncing Count de Brouage, for you know that I do not, and cannot love him—" And turning her moist brilliant eyes upon the general, she slowly continued: "No, I cannot love him. The man whom I could love will not be like him. He will be strong to meet the difficulties of life, he will be valiant; he will have conquered, by his energy, a high position in a world where power is the portion of the brave; he will not depend upon others—"

"In that case," interrupted M. de Brouage, in a mocking tone, "he will be, at least, fifty years old."

"What does his age matter?"

"Dash it! It matters a good deal. There are days when I regret that I am no longer a sub-lieutenant—many such days in fact." The air and manner of the general seemed to imply that this was one of the days in question.

"It is strange," murmured Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier, "how little men understand women!"

"They should be forgiven; you women are riddles that cannot be explained."

"No; we are sincere, but no one believes in our sincerity. We are born weak. Artfulness is our natural weapon, and so you imagine that we always dissemble. But you judge us wrong. If you could read our hearts, you would see that they are controlled by our feelings, and that they alone lead us. Where they bid us go we go."

Camp life had never allowed the general time to study the physiology of love, and he did not understand its subtlety. But in Octavie's protestations there was a point which, although he did not admit it, he felt very anxious to clear up. "Mademoiselle," he said, bluntly, "I am only an old soldier, but I have read Molière's *École des Femmes*, and I know that Agnès had no fancy for Arnolphe; she preferred Horace, and she was right."

"You do not, I presume, do me the injury to compare me to Agnès, who is but a simpleton, while Arnolphe is only an absurd old greybeard. I also

have read that play, in which Molière undertakes to depict our real feelings, and I find it false. Horace does not interest me. He is young, but I fail to see any merit in that! and Agnès will be nicely off when she has married this light-headed youth, who will deceive her, and in time turn into an Arnolphe himself."

"You really plead the cause of men of my age too well for me to contradict you, mademoiselle."

"Your age!" replied the chevalier's daughter. "I never gave that a thought."

Then, confused at having let fall so significant a remark, she blushed, and to regain countenance began to play with the engravings upon the table where her fan now lay. One of the prints slipped from her slender fingers and fell to the floor.

The general bent down to pick it up and Octavie allowed him to do so.

A woman of the middle classes would have stooped to prevent the marquis from taking such trouble, but the chevalier's daughter had the manners of a princess, and princesses are sparing in their movements. She merely made a somewhat expressive gesture, and then leaned back upon the sofa with a look which was more expressive still. Her cheeks turned pale, her eyes half-closed, her lips parted, her form, reclining languishing, seemed to quiver, and her foot, the charming foot which the general had not been able to take his eyes from, disappeared under the long folds of her dress.

M. de Brouage did not notice much of all this, for he was examining the print he held, which was a lithograph. The art of reproducing a drawing made on stone, had as yet given but very imperfect results. Still an engraving signed by a master would have made less impression upon the general than this rude specimen of the invention which the vaudeville writers of the day had been celebrating for a year past. On this coarse sheet of paper, in the midst of a sketchy landscape, a man was depicted mounted upon a fiery charger. He wore a helmet and high boots, brandished a huge sabre, and was charging at full speed at some foot soldiers, who were timidly crossing their bayonets in a way which showed that they would not hold out against so formidable an assailant. On one side a pine tree rose up to give more character to the landscape, and the scene was clearly explained by the title printed below: "The colonel of the 9th Dragoons breaking through a square of Russian infantry at the battle of the Berezina."

If it were chance that had placed this lithograph in the hand of the person it represented, it was a singularly happy one, for the warlike achievement which it recalled had been M. de Brouage's most brilliant feat at arms. The brave swordsman might not have recognized himself, but when he read the lines below the print, doubt became impossible. It was really himself whom a patriotic artist had depicted; it was really his portrait in the possession of Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier who must often look at it, as it was kept under her very hand as it were.

This unexpected discovery agitated the general though he was not easily disturbed. He remained silent for a moment, looking first at the picture and then at Octavie, and asking himself what it could all mean. He was thinking: "What was the aim of what she just said about the *École des Femmes*? Why did this print fall down just in time to show me that she had thought of me before she knew me? She really seems to be making love to me. Poor René! if I were but fifteen years younger I should do

him the service of undeceiving him entirely by approaching his lady-love. But I think that I should be committing an act of folly. When one is caught in the toils of this conqueror of hearts, it must be very difficult to free oneself, even when a man is as cool as I am. I will let her see that I have guessed her thoughts, and will never become her dupe."

So he placed the lithograph upon the table again, and said quietly: "The intention is good; the 9th Dragoons was a fine, brave regiment; the artist was right in dedicating his work to it, and I am delighted that you have bought it; it proves that you are fond of everything that recalls our army's glorious campaigns, for the work itself does not amount to much."

"What does that matter?" replied Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier. "The drawing may be faulty, but it recalls a dear remembrance to me."

"A remembrance?" repeated the general, greatly puzzled.

"Yes; I was in England then, at Hartwell, with my father, who had followed the Count de Provence there. I was scarcely thirteen, and I was already very enthusiastic about the heroism of our soldiers. I used eagerly to read all the papers that recorded our triumphs and reverses. The victories of the Emperor ought to have grieved me, as they prevented the royalist exiles from returning to France, but I became enthusiastic over them. I was proud of the success of our generals. I knew all their names, I longed to see them, I loved them, and when the evil days of the retreat from Russia came, I wept for the reverses of those heroes and suffered with them."

Octavie looked superb as she thus spoke, and M. de Brouage devoured her with his eyes. Her impassioned voice stirred his heart, and her ardent words awoke within him the burning recollections of earlier years.

"One day," she resumed with increasing animation, "there came that fatal bulletin, the 29th, which acquainted the world with the disaster of the Berezina. Then came accounts in the London papers sent by an English officer attached to the Russian army. Although an enemy of France, he described in a most telling manner how an entire Russian division had been attacked by a few mounted dragoons. He praised their leader, a French nobleman, who, by charging at their head, had saved the wreck of our army, which had been driven toward the bridges; and he gave the name of that leader—some prisoners had told it him—and I have never forgotten it."

The marquis started, and to hide his emotion, which was not perhaps caused by this reminiscence of his military career, he replied: "Yes, it was a terrible day, that 29th of November, 1812. We were three hundred when I led the 9th Dragoons to that final charge. At night there were not fifty of us."

"And you commanded those heroic men; you received three wounds——"

"You know that, too?"

"I know your whole life, for your name never left my memory. I followed you in thought through Germany to Lutzen, Dresden, and Leipsic, and during that bloody campaign in France, when you fought up to the final hour. Your image filled my childish imagination. I had never seen you, and I did not dare to hope that I should ever see you, and yet I knew you as I knew the heroes of the tales of chivalry that my father allowed me to read."

"You must now think that I am very unlike them," said M. de Brouage trying to smile so as to seem unconcerned.

Octavie made no rejoinder to this interruption, but her eyes clearly ex-

pressed that she preferred the general to Malek-Adhel. "Three years went by," she resumed with animation. "Our exile had come to an end. We resided in Paris, and, thanks to the King's kindness, my father was able to purchase this house. I had grown up, and there was already a talk of marrying me. But I wished to remain free. I still lived in the dreams of my girlhood. I had formed an ideal which was not realized by any of the suitors who were proposed to me. My happiness consisted by going to all the reviews, and in gazing at the illustrious captains who had conquered Europe. And one day," added Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier, "on the Place du Carrousel my father pointed out to me a general who was going by, calm and dignified, at the head of the squadrons which he had so often led to battle, and he said to me, 'That is he, the hero who commanded the famous charge at the Berezina.'"

This time, Octavie had touched the heart of the marquis in its most sensitive part. He flushed with pleasure, and he drew himself up as though he had been at a review and under the eyes of the King in person. He had his little weaknesses; he liked to be told that he looked superb in uniform and on horseback, for his campaigns and his wounds had not tampered with his fine appearance, and he was still, and justly considered to be, one of the handsomest men in the army.

However, he was too thoroughly a man of the world, and had seen too much of life, not to be greatly surprised at the singular welcome given him by the chevalier's beautiful daughter. Her beauty intoxicated him, her words charmed him. He was glad that she had renounced the nephew, and not at all sorry that she admired the uncle. But he somewhat mistrusted the sincerity of the sentiments which she expressed, and considered that she became enthusiastic very suddenly. Unfortunately, he was not self-possessed enough to fully realise the situation, and had quite lost sight of the outset of the conversation, even of his unpleasant meeting with the student Marcas, and the ambiguous information given respecting Octavie's father, by the Director-General of Police. Experience does not always prevent infatuation; and the General de Brouage, despite his age, would perhaps have gone further than he intended along the path to which Octavie had led him. Fortunately for him, however, the door opened, and M. de Saint-Hélier entered the room.

The more or less authentic chevalier was an old gentleman of prepossessing appearance. He was dressed with extreme care, and wore his hair in the old style, fashion still admitting of a dash of powder and curled locks above the ears; his necktie was white, and his shoes ornamented with handsome gold buckles. His face inspired liking at the first glance; it expressed great intelligence, and even kindness. In his youth he must indeed have been very handsome, and at sight of him it was easy to understand the beauty of his daughter. He bowed low, but not in a servile manner, to M. de Brouage, who had already risen, and who was forced to admit that the presumed adventurer was a very elegant-looking man.

"You do me a great honour in calling upon me, Monsieur le Marquis," began the chevalier, without showing the least embarrassment, "and I am extremely sorry that I was not at home to receive you."

"Your daughter was kind enough to receive me, sir," said the general, who wished to curtail all ceremony, and also, perhaps, to place himself beyond the reach of Octavie's eyes. "I explained the purpose of my visit to her. Allow me now to take leave of you both."

And after bowing to Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier, M. de Brouage

favoured her father with a somewhat abrupt salutation, and went away, but not without a look from Octavie, which he returned, and which stirred his very heart.

The chevalier accompanied his noble visitor to the threshold of his apartment, but had the good taste to avoid questioning him. Moreover, he was too well acquainted with the usages of society, and too astute to evince inquisitiveness, and besides, he knew he could learn everything by questioning his daughter.

"What has happened, my love?" said he to Octavie, as he returned to the study.

"The marquis came to say that he had forbidden his nephew to marry me. I had been warned by a letter from Count René, so I gave orders that the marquis should be shown in, and I received him myself."

M. de Saint-Héliér showed no surprise at this clear and concise reply. The relations between the father and daughter were by no means formal; frankness prevailed, although it did not exclude respect.

"What passed between you?" asked the chevalier, quietly.

"Before telling you the result of our conversation, I must request you to dismiss your secretary, who undertook to remain in the room in spite of my forbidding him to do so, and who was still here when the marquis came in. I had to turn him out."

"Send him away! the mischief! it will be difficult. He was recommended to me by a very influential deputy. Has the fellow presumed to fall in love with you?"

"Yes. I soon settled that; but he must go. I insist upon it. That being understood, I must tell you that I very plainly told the marquis that I did not love his nephew and had no idea of marrying him."

"Did he believe it?"

"Why not! It is the truth."

"What! do you give up the idea of being a countess?"

"Yes. A countess without money and without a peerage, what does that amount to? The general declared that René would never succeed him in the Chamber of Peers. He has made up his mind to marry again in order to have a direct heir."

"Have you taken it into your head to be a peeress and a marchioness?" asked the chevalier, who fully understood his daughter.

"Why not?" replied Octavie, calmly.

"My dear child," said M. de Saint-Héliér, pleasantly, "you have plenty of will and intellect, but you don't understand the situation."

"Good! I can guess what you are going to say. You are going to tell me that your secret functions are of a nature to prevent a nobleman from becoming your son-in-law. I don't know, or wish to know, what those functions of yours are. The knowledge might trouble me. It is enough to know that they are secret, and that you can give them up when I have attained my aim."

"But you never will attain it. You will waste your youth in pursuing an illusion. I am working to amass a fine dowry for you, and I am even now looking after two or three good things which may enrich me all at once. Instead of thinking of splendid impossibilities, you would do better to marry Des Loquetières who on his side is now on the point of making a fortune."

"Father, I beg of you never to speak of that man to me. I will die as I am or else I will be a peeress."

“Through Monsieur de Brouage? This is mere madness. Even if he were so infatuated as to love you, he would never dare to give you his name. You deceive yourself with this hope, because he has lost his only son. You forget, however, that he has a daughter, and that he cannot make Octavie de Saint-Hélier the step-mother of Antoinette de Brouage.”

“A daughter! True, I forgot he had a daughter,” murmured Octavie. And she fell into a profound reverie, which her father did not disturb. At last, however, suddenly raising her head, she exclaimed: “I have changed my mind. Please don’t send that fellow Marcas away.”

VIII.

VICTORIN MARCAS, on being dismissed by Octavie from M. de Saint-Hélier’s study, went out grinding his teeth and snarling like a wounded panther. He did not admit that he was defeated, and relied upon soon returning to the chevalier’s house, for he considered himself entitled to better treatment, and resolved to have his revenge, not upon the haughty beauty who had driven him away, but upon the man in whose presence he had experienced such well-deserved humiliation. Marcas was by no means patient, and when his self-love was hurt he became ferocious. So he began prowling about under the arcade in front of the house, with the praiseworthy intention of waiting for the general, insulting him, and challenging him to fight a duel.

Fighting duels was Marcas’s strong point, his *ultima ratio*. He spent half his time in fencing-halls, and at the pistol gallery on the Boulevard Montparnasse. He had indeed attained to great skill in all murderous exercises, and had a kind of celebrity as a lucky fighter. He willingly let himself be called the “champion of the schools” by the students of his acquaintance. He was, in fact, always looked up whenever there was a question of defending the quarrelsome corporation of the students on the duelling ground. He entered eagerly into all such frays, and had always returned scathless after wounding his antagonist more or less seriously. He was not, however, yet supposed to have killed any one; this was wanting to his fame, and it would be a good beginning in manslaughter to despatch the Marquis de Brouage to another world. He would then have been borne in triumph by the whole Quartier Latin.

But it was not easy to win that enviable reputation. A peer of France would scarcely go upon the duelling-ground with a student, especially a peer who had proved his prowess in the battlefields of the Empire. The chevalier’s irascible secretary had a great deal of good sense, and when his anger was somewhat calmed, he said to himself that if he took it into his head to challenge General de Brouage, that nobleman would laugh in his face. Marcas would gladly have shown him violence to force him to give him satisfaction, but he knew that a quarrel thus begun would not turn out advantageously. The marquis was strong enough to knock him down on the spot, and after thrashing him would certainly have him arrested.

Now Marcas had excellent reasons for objecting to such a consummation as that. His opinions in politics were not favourably regarded, and the authorities would severely punish any offence on the part of a man known as an agitator and picker of quarrels. The least that would happen would be some months’ imprisonment, without counting the disadvantage of being expelled from the Law School and sent back to his native province

Now, Marcas was extremely desirous of remaining at liberty and of residing in Paris. He thought he had a brilliant political career before him, and was not wrong in the fancy, perhaps, for, after the revolution of 1830, men who had been Carbonari became ministers. Accordingly, after due reflection as to the probable results of the outburst which he had meditated he made up his mind to wait for a better chance for revenge, and walked off.

He resolved to wait until the morrow, to have an explanation with Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier, for he had not the smallest excuse for now returning to the house as his regular daily work was done. In fact, his post was almost a sinecure. Octavie's father kept him an hour or two to classify books or copy unimportant letters, after which he let him go to his lectures or studies. Certain friends of the family were even surprised that the chevalier, who was not known to hold any official position, should indulge in the luxury of a secretary. They did not know that the worthy chevalier had at first thought that the young native of Languedoc would inherit a large property, and had looked upon him as a good match for Octavie. Having subsequently found out his mistake, thanks to information skilfully acquired, this wise and tender father no longer cared to retain the services of a young man whose disposition displeased and whose manners alarmed him. He was only waiting for a pretext for sending him away, but had not yet found one, perhaps because Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier had prevented it.

Marcas had various occupations besides, which took up all the time which he did not spend at the chevalier's house. In fact, days and nights scarcely sufficed for all that he had to do. He was seen in the morning at the School of Arts or at the Sorbonne, and in the evening at hundreds of other places. He had formerly gone very frequently to Madame de Casanova's rooms, and since the baroness had disappeared, he haunted the theatres, coffee-houses, gambling-hells, and public balls. Where did he find the money necessary for this somewhat expensive mode of life? The monthly allowance from his father was certainly insufficient, but, at that time, conspirators did not lack coin. And Marcas was an ardent conspirator. Against whom? That he knew right well. For whose advancement? That did not trouble him, or rather he conspired in hopes of benefiting himself. His instinct had told him that in France a man must always be on the side of the opposition, if he wishes to make his way, and that those who overthrow a government always gain something by doing so.

As soon as he had arrived in Paris, he had thrown himself into the revolutionary movement. The moment was a lucky one. The Carbonari, whose rallying signal was the Coral Pin, and who had been brought into France by Orso, Prince of Catanzaro, were there being organised upon a formidable footing, attracting all the young men of the Paris schools, who were fascinated by the hollow doctrines, and more especially by the mysterious ceremonies of the sect. When a fellow is only twenty, he likes to take terrible oaths with one hand stretched out over a dagger.

Marcas had sworn very often, but not for the sake of cutting a figure in displays copied from the practices of the Freemasons. He aimed at serious results. Carbonarism was his career. He wished to make his way in it, and rise to the highest grade if possible. But he was still very low down. Merely the delegate of a small *venta* to a central one, he had no connection with the high *venta*, in which the important men of the party met, such as Lafayette, de Corcelles, Voyer d'Argenson, Dupont de l'Eure, De Schonen, Kœchlin, Manuel, Fabvier, Barthe, Mérilhou, and Trélat. He was known to merely a few leaders, to the prince among others, and to Fabien de

Brouage, who presided over a *venta* in juxtaposition with that which he represented as a delegate. He had not yet had any important mission confided to him, but Orso appreciated his talents, and was only waiting for an occasion to put them to the test.

The prince, with his true Italian cunning, had soon realised what use could be made of this daring young fellow, and had often spoken of him to the other leaders of the conspiracy. He had even gone so far as to entrust him with recruiting partisans of the Coral Pin Association, among the officers and soldiers of a regiment which had just arrived in Paris, the 45th of the Line, which was thought to be hostile to the government. One of the battalions of this regiment was quartered in the Rue du Foin Saint-Jacques; another in the Rue Saint-Jean de Beauvais, on the outskirts of the Quartier des Ecoles, where Marcas lived, and where he, indeed, exercised real influence.

Marcas tried his skill in winning over some of the sergeants, and succeeded really well. On the day of M. de Brouage's interview with Octavie, the young student, under pretext of a fencing-match, had organised a meeting at a wine shop, situated on the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, behind the church of Saint-Etienne du Mont, and known by the sign of *King Clovis*. It was a question of admitting three new members of the Association, two corporals and a quartermaster of the 45th; money and daggers were to be given to them, and their duties were to be explained, that is to say, they were to be called upon to desert their flag at the first signal from the high *venta*.

Marcas meant to be present at this meeting, at which he was indeed to preside. He wished to make a speech, for like all Southerners, he was a ready speaker. The prospect of airing his eloquence, and winning the approbation of the grandmaster of the Coral Pin Association, had a deal to do with his resolve to abandon, for the time being, the plans which his anger had led him to make as regards General de Brouage.

When once he had decided not to linger near Saint-Hélîer's house, he made straight for the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève. The time for the meeting had not yet come, but he first had to repair to the Place du Panthéon, where his presence was indispensable.

A students' riot was about to take place. The young fellows were going to hiss M. de Portets, a professor of equity, who took the liberty of being a royalist, and who had dared, on the day before, to tear down a revolutionary placard, posted up at the door of the Faculty.

Marcas was the hero of these students' rows, which consisted in hooting the gendarmes, breaking windows, and preventing peaceful students from attending the lectures. For about a year, the young gentlemen of the schools, toadied by the opposition newspapers, had taken it into their heads to break out on all occasions, sometimes at the Sorbonne, where they shouted for M. Guizot or M. Cousin, and sometimes on the Quai d'Orsay, where they applauded the liberal deputies when they came out from the Chamber. One organiser of these manifestations, a young fellow named Lallemand, had been killed on the 3rd of June, 1820, on the Place du Carrousel. The anniversary of his death was drawing near, and in order to celebrate it in proper style, his comrades intended to indulge in extremely riotous conduct. Marcas, of course, was one of the instigators of the various disturbances, and was present almost invariably. In this particular instance, however, he did not wish to take part in the affair, having more serious work awaiting him elsewhere.

It was not without a purpose that he had decided to receive the new members of the Coral Pin Association, at the very hour when the students intended to create a disturbance. He calculated that the police would be fully occupied in watching what might occur on the Place du Panthéon, and would not think of entering a tavern in a lonely street behind a church; he indeed considered that no one was likely to disturb the mysterious rites at the *King Clovis*.

On emerging from the Rue Saint-Jacques, he found that an immense crowd had already gathered near the Law School. Several hundred students, wearing the grotesque costume of the period, with white cravats and huge steel buckles on their "blunderbuss" hats, were pushing, stamping, and shouting as noisily as possible. The air of the *Lampions* had not yet been composed, and the *Carmagnole* had grown rather stale, so that the young fellows sang a vile song, in which the King, the Count d'Artois, the Duke d'Angoulême, and the Duchess de Berry, were abused in the coarsest possible language. A few dissenters tried to make them stop, by shouting out: "Down with the Jacobins!" But the students in reply shouted: "Down with the white toads!" and the low song began again.

This spectacle and the noise delighted Victorin Marcas, who burst through the crowd shaking hands with many of the young fellows whom he found there, and sometimes giving the grip used by the Carbonari. But he did not remain, and instead of mingling with the brawlers he slipped up to the gate of the Panthéon, which the Restoration had again converted into a church dedicated to Saint-Genève. The disturbance was increasing, and a noisy night seemed ahead. Marcas, having seen all that he wished to see, and found what he had been looking for, had nothing further to do there. He turned quietly to the left, to reach Saint-Etienne du Mont, and had just stopped to see whether any gendarmes or suspicious persons were lurking about, when he felt himself pulled by the sleeve. He turned round, and to his great annoyance, found himself face to face with M. des Loquetières, who said to him, with a laugh: "Aha! my young friend, I've caught you now! You have come to hiss your professors! I don't believe your father sent you to Paris for that."

"I have not come to hiss anybody," replied Marcas, quietly. "I am going home. I live near here, in the Rue des Grés."

"Ah! that's right! I should have been very sorry to see you among those brawlers."

"There's no fear of that! I came this way because it is on my road. However," added Marcas, with a glance at Des Loquetières, "I am rather surprised to see *you* here, for you live, if I am not mistaken, at a great distance from the Quartier Latin."

Marcas, in spite of his natural cunning, had never suspected that Des Loquetières was a spy. He thought him an old royalist foggy, and despised and disliked him, for he fancied that he had seen him ogling Octavie, but he did not in the least suspect him of being a detective. However, on thus meeting Saint-Hélier's peaceful friend near the scene of a riot, he suddenly remembered that he had met him upon the stairs at the baroness's house on the very night when she had disappeared. This coincidence awoke a certain mistrust which the spy's pleasant smiles and frank replies soon dispelled.

"You are right, my dear boy," said Des Loquetières, who had that morning received orders from Baron Mounier, the Director-General of the Police, to watch the public, round about the Law School. "This riot is no

place for me, and I am only anxious to get out of it. I came upon it while returning from a stroll in the Luxembourg grounds, and I don't understand what it all means. Who is it that these young fellows have a grudge against? Whom are they hissing?"

"One of their professors."

"Aha! he is too strict, I presume. I can understand the noise now. La Fontaine was right in saying:

"Our master is our enemy,
I tell you so in plain French!"

I myself, when I was at college, I used to play all manner of tricks upon the teachers who kept me in. But why are they abusing the King and the royal family?"

"They are their masters, too," said Marcas, somewhat heedlessly.

"Ah, true!" sighed Des Loquetières; "at their age people are always on the side of the opposition. But, fortunately, my dear Victorin, you are not that way inclined. Your father taught you good principles, and you won't become perverted at my friend Saint-Hélier's house. How is the dear chevalier? I have not seen him for several days. And how is his charming daughter, Mademoiselle Octavie?"

"Very well, I believe," replied the student. "I went this morning to do my usual work, and I am going to take advantage of my leisure to study the code. So allow me to leave you."

"Go, young man, go!" exclaimed Des Loquetières. "Work is sacred. Heaven forbid that I should keep you from it! Your comrades would do well to follow your example, instead of flocking together to shout out seditious songs—that libellous refrain about the King, the Count d'Artois and the Duke d'Angoulême is positively disgusting. And when one thinks that those noisy fellows will be King's councillors one of these days, and prosecute those who disturb the peace, and that others of them will be solicitors, notaries, and fathers of families, too! Where are we going, good heavens? Where are we going?"

"I am going to the Rue des Grés," said Marcas, with a bow to the detective, and gliding away in the direction of his dwelling.

Des Loquetières did not attempt to detain him, and had no idea of following him, for he in no wise mistrusted Saint-Hélier's secretary. The student took good care not to go immediately to the *King Clovis*, not that he thought that the chevalier's friend might spy upon him, but he knew that prudence was the parent of safety, and when he was working for the Coral Pin Association, he was always careful to double like a tracked hare, so as to throw the hounds off the scent.

He turned to the left to enter the Rue des Grés, where he lived, and which was then the real centre of the Quartier Latin. There were a great many seven-year students and dealers in second-hand books about there, as is the case even now, for the street has escaped demolition, and still exists. But it now bears the name of the learned Cujas.

Marcas darted lightly up his five flights, went to the window, and after watching for a quarter of an hour, and seeing no suspicious person about, he went down the rickety stairs, four steps at a time, darted along a by-street which ran past the famous School of Sainte-Barbe, plunged into the labyrinth of narrow winding thoroughfares, which then covered the northern slope of the hill of Sainte-Geneviève, and reached the Rue de la Montagne by a long detour,

There, in an unfrequented corner behind the apsis of the church of Saint-Etienne du Mont, above a low door was displayed a large signboard upon which some unknown artist had attempted to portray King Clovis, splitting the head of the soldier who refused to give up the vase of Soissons. The publican who thus placed his establishment under the patronage of the great Merovingian monarch was an old republican, whose first revolutionary exploits went as far back as the massacre of 1792. He had kept himself in the background under the Empire. Fouché's police did not mince matters with the men of the Reign of Terror. Fouché—a duke, thanks to Napoleon—knew all the madmen who had howled with him in bygone times, and he showed them but little affection. However, since the Restoration, Citizen Griffard—such was the name of the incorrigible Jacobin in question—had again begun working for what he called the good cause. He had a little money, amassed the fiend alone knows how, and in 1817 he had bought a tavern and eating-house, in a quarter in which he could find not only plenty of customers, but recruits for the army of conspirators also. His trade thrived well and the government let him alone, for he was very cautious, and the police never received any reports against him.

Marcas had made his acquaintance on his arrival in Paris, and frequently went to his tavern, not to drink, but to meet the soldiers whom he had persuaded to join the Carbonari. The tavern was advantageously located for his purpose. There were four or five barracks in the neighbourhood, and behind the bar-room, communicating with the street, there was a garden beyond which a kind of gallery rose up, set aside for habitual customers. This gallery, of oblong form, had a number of little tables set along its walls, and also contained a somewhat dilapidated billiard-table. It could even serve for fencing-matches, for there was an open space between the billiard-table and the counter at the end, and as these matches were often an excuse for gatherings of Carbonari, the crafty Griffard kept wire-masks, gloves, foils, and plastrons in readiness for use.

Marcas, on his arrival, was told by the landlord that the three neophytes and a non-commissioned officer of the 45th, the president of the military *venta* of the regiment, had been waiting for him for half an hour. Des Loquetières had delayed him, but that mattered little, as the soldiers were off duty for all day. The student received from the landlord the assurance that no one would enter the garden, and reassured on this point, he proceeded to the billiard-room, where the ceremony of initiation was to take place.

The sergeant-major who had brought the candidates was a young man of twenty-seven, with whom Marcas had long been acquainted. They were fellow countrymen, and had met the year before in a masonic lodge, a veritable ante-room for Carbonarism. Both already held grades, but Marcas, being the delegate of a private *venta* to a central *venta*, was the sergeant's superior. They greeted one another with the prescribed formula, for formality held a great place in the confabulations of the Coral Pin. The sergeant came forward with his hand open, and the palm turned upward; the student placed his forefinger perpendicularly upon this open palm, traced two strokes upon it with his finger, and then gave three taps. Thereupon, with the same hand—it was the right one—the sergeant took hold of Marcas's right hand, crossing his thumbs in such a way that they made a capital N, the initial letter of Napoleon's name. The Emperor had died on the 5th of May, at St. Helena, but there was no telegraph and no steamships in those days, and the news did not reach Paris till the 6th of

July, by the English papers. So the Carbonari still mingled a large amount of imperialism with their avowed republicanism. In fact this ingredient appeared to them indispensable for winning over the twenty thousand officers who had been put on half pay, without counting the old soldiers sent back to the plough or reduced to beggary. Revolutionists have no scruples.

While the two leaders were going through these complicated motions, the three neophytes, who were standing hard by, looked on with admiration. Two were common soldiers, one of them quite young, fresh from his village home, and a believer in the Universal Republic; the second, an old trooper of the Empire, who hated the Bourbons, who had deprived him of his grade as corporal. The third, a pretentious quartermaster, was anxious to join the Carbonari, so that he might have an opportunity to harangue his brethren and sing them Béranger's songs. He and the sergeant-major had ordered some bottles of white wine with which they meant to drink to the coming revolution.

"Citizens," began Marcas, who was always glad to air his eloquence, "your sponsor answers for you, and I can therefore proceed to your reception."

"Not till you taste this Chablis, citizen," said the quartermaster, "and then, if you like, I will sing you the *Old Flag* or the *Grandmother*, by our national poet."

"Sing! you must be crazy! Do you want to draw a crowd?" exclaimed Marcas, with a warning look at the sergeant-major.

The student was annoyed that so jovial a fellow should be proposed as a Carbonari, and besides, he was beginning to think that he was a traitor, a "provoker," as was then said. The sergeant-major was about to lecture his comrade sharply when the sound of voices reached them from the garden.

Marcas clearly distinguished Griffard's voice, and realised that the tavern-keeper was quarrelling with some customers, who were making still more noise than he did.

"It's some fellows who insist upon coming into the garden to drink," said the non-commissioned officer, after listening a moment.

"They speak like Germans," added the quartermaster, who had drawn near to the door, in order to hear more distinctly.

"I'll bet they are Swiss," muttered the old trooper. "If Griffard let's them in, there'll be a mess."

"There is no way of getting out without meeting them. They are at the bar."

"They must not find you talking with a civilian," said Marcas, hurriedly; "they would most likely report against you. You asked permission to go to a fencing-match, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, take down the foils and let us pair off. They cannot find fault with that, and we will resume business when they have gone. Off with your coats, gentlemen, and on guard!"

The idea seemed a good one and was promptly acted upon.

In the twinkling of an eye, the gloves, masks, and plastrons were donned. The student crossed swords with the quartermaster, the old trooper took the sergeant-major for his antagonist, and the young soldier leaned against the wall as though resting after a bout.

The scene had scarcely been arranged when four men rushed into the garden, pushing aside Griffard who tried to keep them out. The old soldier had not been mistaken in his guess, for the intruders were Swiss of

the 2nd Regiment, three privates and a corporal in undress uniform, red tunics, white belts, and short swords at their sides. The three privates had placid faces, such as one sees among the peasantry of the Four Cantons; but the corporal was a tall, robust man, with a disagreeable cast of countenance.

They all appeared excited, knocking with the hilts of their swords upon the tables under the trees, and swearing while they hustled the landlord about, and ordered him to bring them some beer.

"Be calm," said Marcas to the quartermaster, as they kept on fencing. "We must avoid a quarrel by all means."

"Hallo! there are some Frenchmen playing with knitting-needles," said the Swiss corporal, approaching one of the open windows. The fencers did not seem to see him; but he leaned over the lower portion of the framework, and after looking on for a moment while the old trooper continued fencing with the sergeant-major, he began to sneer in a loud voice.

The student and the soldiers of the 45th bore this indirect provocation without a word. They realised the necessity for calmness, in order to avoid compromising the Association of the Coral Pin. If Marcas had been alone he would not have had so much patience, for he sought every occasion to cross swords with the defenders of the throne. But he knew that the severest orders had been given to prevent duelling among soldiers of the Paris garrison, and did not want to involve his military brethren in a troublesome quarrel, the more so, as the orders given referred especially to the foreign regiments and to the 45th of the Line.

The Swiss of the Royal Guard, who had resumed service after the Restoration, remembered the fate of their predecessors, cruelly massacred by the people on the 10th of August, 1792, and they did not like the Parisians, nor did the Parisians like them. Brave, faithful, well disciplined, but unsociable, the soldiers recruited in the Catholic cantons of the Swiss Confederation associated but little with the French troops, even with those of the guard. Commanded exclusively by officers of their own country, they were subjected to special regulations in accordance with arrangements between the Helvetian Government and that of the King of France. They could not be tried for crimes or misdemeanours, except by their immediate superiors, and were treated in this respect like soldiers on campaign. Desertion, theft, or marauding were punishable by death. The culprit was sentenced in the open air before the whole regiment under arms. The sentence was written upon a drum head and executed on the spot. In 1827, a Swiss soldier of the 7th Regiment was tried in this summary manner, and executed on the plain of Grenelle for having, while on duty as a sentry at night-time, at the Arc de Triomphe on the Place du Carrousel, stolen the watch of a drunken man who had asked him to tell him his way.

Men so strictly controlled and severely punished were not always in a good humour, and when they had soldiers of the 45th to deal with, they became aggressive. This regiment of the line, which had first been called the Legion of Eure-et-Loire, had been formed at Chartres in 1816, from remnants of the old army, and a small number of volunteers. It was thus composed, for the most part, of men who had served under Napoleon, and especially of old non-commissioned officers who had been reduced to the ranks by the Restoration. On the other hand, all the superior officers, including the colonel, were men who had emigrated, and returned in 1815, having nothing in common with their subordinates, neither origin, nor ideas, and belonging to a different world as well as leading a different life. Some

captains of the Empire had been at first kept at the head of their companies. But this had not lasted long. Four of them, the best liked by the soldiers, had been discharged in 1820. Those who remained knew that no advancement would be given them, and that they must vegetate, holding a low rank till they retired.

The spirit of the regiment was, for these reasons, hostile to the new government. When called to Paris in 1819, the men had refused at a review to shout "Long live the King!" and they had been sent at once to garrison Havre and Dieppe. However, after two years of exile, the Marquis de Toustain, their commander, had obtained permission to bring them back to the capital. They had only been there a month, and already a large number of the non-commissioned officers and privates had become Carbonari. Marcas, who was at once practical and persuasive, had contributed not a little to this result. However, the military authorities had not yet discovered anything of a precise nature, although the regiment was looked upon with suspicion and closely watched. The lower ranks even comprised men charged with the task of spying upon their comrades, but these fellows failed to discover anything.

All the same, the 45th of the Line was out of favour with royalists, and the Swiss of the guard, who were well-tried supporters of the throne, looked upon it with suspicion. Hence arose fights and duels on all occasions, with the result that stringent regulations were issued by the general commanding the garrison of Paris.

When the Swiss guards appeared at the tavern, Marcas, who knew all about these dissensions between the two regiments, realised that they would try to pick a quarrel with his friends, and that it was the duty of the brethren of the Coral Pin to be calm. The sergeant-major and the three neophytes had the same idea as himself, and they continued fencing conscientiously without paying any attention to the ironical laughter of the red-coated corporal. This son of Helvetia, however, seemed determined to go as far as possible, for he continued watching the fencing, and loudly criticised the thrusts made by the antagonists.

Griffard had by this time made up his mind to serve some beer to his unseemly customers. He hoped that after drinking their fill they would go off as they had come, and would not venture to fight in his establishment. Griffard conspired, dreamed of revolutions and massacres, and would willingly have strangled the last king with the last priest, but he did not wish to be compelled to close his tavern. William Tell's compatriots did honour to the beer, which was served in earthenware pitchers, and the corporal left his post near the window to empty a whole pitcher by himself.

The truce was a short one, however. He returned, carrying his glass filled to the brim, and once more he began to make game of the soldiers, who went on fencing without noticing him. They did not fence very well, to tell the truth, and Marcas himself, who fenced skilfully as a rule, was so annoyed and perplexed by the state of affairs, that he let his antagonist touch him every moment.

"In my country," said the Swiss, "in Uri, the little boys who fight with wooden swords fence better than these French blunderers."

The old soldier, who was fencing with the sergeant, turned quickly and raised his hand to his mask to remove it, so as to answer the insolent foreigner. But Marcas nudged him to make him more cautious, and the trooper restrained his anger.

The gallery was on a level with the garden, in which the three other

Swiss guards were drinking, without thinking of the famous oath taken by their ancestors on the plains of Grütli, and without noticing the aggressive demeanour of the corporal. The young private of the 45th, who was supposed to be resting, stood near in the doorway, and seemingly did not trouble himself in the least about the rudeness of the red-coated foreigner. On the linesmen's shakos deposited in a corner, the disputatious corporal had eventually read the number of the regiment, and he determined to get into a quarrel with one of the Frenchmen as they belonged to the 45th, then the bugbear of the Swiss. But he half despaired of rousing the fencers from their intentional indifference, and thought that he could succeed more easily with a conscript soldier, besides managing better if they eventually crossed swords. Leaving the window where he had seated himself, he went up to the young fellow resting and thrusting his glass in his face, he said with a loud laugh: "Look here, youngster, you must be warm. Down with this to the health of the King."

"I am not thirsty," replied the soldier.

He was a young Norman who had been enrolled and incorporated for about a month in the 45th, the son of a farmer whom the sergeant-major, a Southerner of persuasive tongue, had not had much trouble in converting to Carbonari principles. His hair was golden, his cheeks rosy, and his expression of face altogether innocent.

"I don't care whether you are thirsty or not," cried the corporal. "I insist upon your drinking the King's health!" and reiterating his orders, he attempted to force the soldier to swallow some of the beer.

The Norman was mild but not patient. He seized the glass and dashed the contents into the face of the Swiss, who tried to take him by the throat. But the conscript was nimble and stepped back behind the billiard-table.

This was the signal for open hostilities, and in both camps the scene was taken as a declaration of war. The soldiers of the 45th clearly realised what the insolent foreigner wanted. Marcas himself thought that a quarrel was inevitable, and that it was better to take measures at once. As for the Swiss, they rose up to help their comrade if need be, but they appeared less disposed to fight than he was. The four fencers had taken off their masks. One of them, the old private, left the group and said roughly to the Swiss corporal: "Aren't you ashamed to quarrel with a lad? If you want to try it on, there are four of us here who ask no better than to try a bout. Tell your red-coats there to get ready. Three of us will settle them, and number four will settle you. You can pick him out if you like."

"My men shall not fight, and I choose the fellow who insulted me," replied the Swiss, pointing to the young private.

"It was you who insulted him," exclaimed Marcas, "or rather insulted all of us."

"Well, then, I will give all of you satisfaction, one after another, but I will begin with the youngster."

"As you please," replied the student. "Let us leave here. I know a good place behind the Lourcine barracks on the bank of the Bièvre."

In saying this he had a purpose. He wished to avoid a fray at Griffard's, for fear of attracting the attention of the police to a tavern which was so convenient for receiving neophytes into the Association. He hoped that the soldiers of the 45th would be able to slip off on the way, and once rid of their inconvenient presence, he relied upon recruiting some students, who would serve him as seconds, for he was always ready to run his sword

through a Swiss guard providing he could do so without danger to the Carbonari cause.

However the corporal would not entertain the proposal. "No, no," said he; "I don't want to be locked up. If we fight outside we shall be caught. All we have to do here is to take our places like brave fellows, and no one will know anything about it if you all hold your tongues. The landlord won't go to the police to say that we have been poking one another's ribs at his place."

Marcas and his friends consulted one another by glances and agreed not to put off the fight.

"We won't say anything about it either," said the sergeant-major, "and if you answer for your men—"

"They'll be as silent as fishes. Well, then, let's make an end of it. Take the buttons off two foils. If anybody's killed or wounded say that you quarrelled among yourselves, and then you won't be punished so severely. The general's order doesn't apply to quarrels among comrades."

The quartermaster now drew Marcas aside, and whispered: "That rascal talks as though he had stretched us all on the floor. He must be a good hand at fighting to talk so big."

"Well, he'll find his match," replied Marcas, who longed to slit a royalist's skin.

"Lots ought to be drawn as to who shall begin," said the sergeant-major.

"I'm willing, as soon as I have settled the youngster," replied the Swiss, who was wiping his face with a handkerchief which he had taken from his shako.

"It's cowardly!" exclaimed the old campaigner. "That lad never handled a foil."

"So much the worse for him! What did he throw the beer in my face for?"

"Don't be afraid, old fellow," said the conscript, drawling out his words in Norman fashion, "I didn't learn to handle larding-pins at home, and the fencing-master of the 45th has only given me three lessons, but I have a good arm all the same, and I'm not afraid. Let me settle matters with the corporal of the cray fish there. I'll plump him into the saucepan."

After so brave a declaration it was idle to say more. The Swiss had taken off his tunic, and folded it up carefully. The quartermaster pushed back the tables and chairs, in order to make room between the billiard-table and the counter. "You wish to fight in this gallery, then?" said the corporal, stamping up and down.

"Yes," said Marcas. "The garden is too near the street. The passers-by would hear our swords clashing."

The Swiss corporal made no objection. It suited him as well as his adversaries to fight without attracting the attention of the passers-by, for he knew very well that he would be severely punished if the duel came to the knowledge of his colonel. He meant to make short work of two or three of the clumsy fellows who had just been fencing so badly, and he relied upon the others not peaching. In fact, their interests were best served by silence. As for the soldiers, his countrymen, they had no opinions of their own, and always conformed to his way of looking at things.

The corporal, himself, was a tall, long-limbed fellow, as red-haired as Judas himself, and very powerfully built. Even had he been ignorant of

fencing, he would still have been a formidable adversary, if only from the length of his arms and legs. Marcas examined him, and tried to think what tactics would be the best when his own turn came to cross swords with the long, lanky fellow. The old private had taken the buttons off the foils, and was crossing them in order to offer the hilts to those who were about to use them.

The three Swiss had ranged themselves against the wall on the side of the window ; the three men of the 45th stood in front of them, in a row against the opposite wall, while Marcas climbed upon the billiard-table in order to see the better.

"One word before we begin," said he. "It is understood that in case of an accident, each one looks out for himself. The wounded and the dead will be taken care of by their own comrades. We will take care of ours, and you must promise to go away with your men without bothering about us, just as we agree to let your soldiers take care of you, or carry you away, as they please, if you are disabled."

"Yes, it's agreed," said all the Swiss at once.

"And we will invent a suitable story for our respective chiefs when all is over," added the corporal.

Marcas asked for no more. He thought that he could rely upon the word of the Swiss, and he considered that the duel, whatever the result might be, would not do the brethren of the Coral Pin any harm. He would also have liked to stipulate that Griffard should not be disturbed, but by this request he might reveal everything. He preferred to rely upon the intelligence of the landlord, who, during his long career as a revolutionist, had managed to get out of many a worse scrape. He now saw that he had slipped into the garden, and was pulling a long face at sight of the preparations for the fight. "Shut the street door," he called out, "barricade it inside, and don't open to anybody. We do not wish to be disturbed."

Griffard was only too sorry that he had not closed his place before ; but it was better to do so late than never, and being unable to prevent the fighting, he wished at least to prevent the police from coming in. So he went off in haste to obey the orders given him by Marcas.

The two adversaries now stood, foil in hand. The old trooper retreated, but not before he had succeeded in whispering to the conscript-soldier : "Content yourself with parrying his thrusts and falling back if he comes too near to you."

The Norman looked as though he would fight well, and he was certainly not afraid, for he gazed firmly into his enemy's eyes, and his cheeks retained their flush. But he did not know how to put himself in proper position, and held his sword as though he had been handling a spit from his father's kitchen. Still, at the first lunge made by the Swiss, it was easy to see that he remembered what the old soldier had said to him. He parried it as well as he could, by simply holding his foil firmly, and bounded back in such a way that the point of the corporal's foil, when he began anew, scarcely touched the end of his own. However, with a single stride, the Swiss guard recovered the distance, and began the attack again.

Marcas, perched on the billiard-table, studied the fencing of the Swiss guardsman, and soon saw there was nothing very formidable about it, although it was pretty well according to rule. He indulged in no feints, and but few extrications ; straight thrusts, and that was all, but the thrusts were powerful ones. He evidently relied more upon strength than skill. Perhaps, indeed, he scorned to use more complicated thrusts against so weak

an adversary. However that may have been, Marcas, after due scrutiny, concluded that he could stand against him, and decided that he would not spare him.

Meanwhile, the young Norman had great trouble in escaping from the point of the corporal's foil, which was constantly within six inches of his chest. With his arm as stiff as a bar of iron, he still continued falling back, but he had the presence of mind not to allow himself to be driven up against the wall. He had got between the billiard-table and the window, and had the whole length of the room behind him. This was only a respite, however, for, sooner or later, he would be unable to retreat any further; still, he had gained time.

Driven back by the corporal, and still adopting the same tactics, he soon got beyond the table. The seconds watched the fight, but Marcas did not leave his perch. The Swiss advanced as fast as the soldier recoiled, and, thanks to his long legs, could hold out for a long time without being fatigued by pursuing his enemy. However, he began to depart from his innate phlegm, and his impatience was evident by his hoarse cries and his various exclamations. "Don't get away so fast, little Frenchman!" he exclaimed. "You jump about like a frog. It won't do you the least good. I shall pin you to the wall by-and-bye."

The lad did not reply. He was not afraid, but it requires practice to talk when fencing. He was now as red as a poppy, his forehead streaming with perspiration, and he began to breathe fast. There came a moment when he forgot to extend his arm as he recoiled. The corporal profited by this to make a lunge with lightning-like rapidity, and his foil ran through the youngster's shoulder, the mere force of the thrust stretching him on the floor. The lad's comrades hastened to him and raised him up. His features were contracted, but his mind was clear. "His arm is too long. It wasn't equal odds," he muttered in a low tone.

"Your chest is all right. You will have to go to the infirmary for a week or two, that's all," said the old trooper, as he rapidly examined the wound.

"Give me a glass of white wine. I like cider better, but there is none—"

"That will teach him to turn up his nose at beer, and to refuse to drink the King's health," said the Swiss corporal, who had rejoined his men, and was wiping his bloody foil on the billiard cloth.

"And now I'll teach you to wound our soldiers!" called out the old private. "It's my turn to slit your skin. Come on!" And taking up the wounded fellow's foil, he advanced upon the foe, who, proud of his victory, was ready to begin again.

The quartermaster and the sergeant-major had torn open the lad's shirt, and were dressing the wound, which was not a dangerous one. The Swiss guards were pouring out beer for their corporal, who eagerly swallowed three glasses, one after another. Marcas asked himself if he ought not to have a try, and was stamping about angrily on the table.

However, a new encounter began before he had time to decide. The old soldier of the empire assailed his adversary without ceremony, scarcely giving him time to take his position. He had some idea of fencing as taught in the army, which is not by any means a complicated affair. He knew how to hold a sword, and was master of a certain number of thrusts which he considered irresistible, and he believed himself to be a good fencer. In this he was mistaken, as the fight clearly demonstrated. The long, lanky corporal began by keeping off the old trooper, who was short

and squat : he at first merely defended himself and parried a few thrusts ; then, seeing that his adversary was out of countenance at his want of success, and already weary, he attacked him in his turn. The old soldier was compelled to retreat like the young one, to get beyond the reach of the long arms of the Helvetian giant ; however, he retreated, still defending himself, and held out for some time. But the final result of the fight was that, being too late in executing a second parry, he was wounded in the right thigh. He did not fall, for he was strong, but he lost a deal of blood, and was obliged to seat himself upon a little table which was fortunately near him. The young soldier's wound was now dressed after a fashion, and the two non-commissioned officers hastened to the other wounded man. This time, Marcas came down from the billiard-table. It was time for him to try his hand, for the fight was decidedly going against the brethren of the Coral Pin.

"Are you able to walk ?" he said to the old private.

"I couldn't go far, but if one of you will help me, I may be able to drag myself along."

"You must go, then. The conscript is wounded in the right shoulder, but you can lean on his left arm, and the Rue du Foin Saint-Jacques is quite near. In a quarter of an hour you will be at the barracks ; you will ask the surgeon to dress your wound, and if he asks who gave it you, say that you fought between yourselves, and got hurt both together."

"That's a good idea !" exclaimed the old corporal.

"A capital idea !" said the conscript, who, feeling better after his glass of wine, had now approached his comrades.

"Let us help them to dress again," added Marcas to the non-commissioned officers. "Cold is bad for their wounds. We must go away one after another. If we manage properly the adjutants won't know anything about all this."

"We sha'n't tell them," said the Swiss corporal, flourishing his weapon. "Well," added he, "has the 45th had enough ?"

The sergeant-major was about to reply, but Marcas nudged him and whispered : "Let our comrades get away first. I'll manage the rest."

The old private, with a handkerchief bound round his thigh, had now put on his coat, and the conscript had slipped his arm into one sleeve of his tunic and thrown the other over his wounded shoulder. Marcas personally led them to the door. He wished to say a few more words to the landlord. He began by telling him to set the door merely ajar so that the wounded men could get out without being seen.

This was done. The street was deserted. The two soldiers slipped out and went off, lamely enough, towards the barracks, somewhat comforted and encouraged by the parting words of Marcas, who promised to send a good report of them to the high *venta*. Then, when the door was closed again, the student hurriedly said to Griffard : "I am going to bring down the Swiss. Be ready to open the door for me. I will make off in one direction, and the officers in the other. Don't worry about the red-coats. They are afraid of being arrested, and won't say anything about the 45th. When you are questioned, say whatever they say. You must declare that their corporal was killed by a man whom you don't know."

And then without waiting for the objections which the landlord wished to make, Marcas ran back to the garden, where he found the Swiss emptying another pitcher of beer. The two Frenchmen had remained in the room. "It is our turn now," said the student to the victor.

"What! do you want a taste too, little one?" said the corporal, with a sneer. "Well, that suits me exactly! But if you keep backing like the others I warn you that I sha'n't run after you. I have had enough of running after hares."

"Don't be alarmed! I sha'n't retreat a single inch, for if you are agreeable, we'll fight on the billiard-table."

"On the billiard-table!" exclaimed the Swiss, with a loud laugh. "You want to fight on the billiard-table, my little Frenchman, do you?"

"Yes," replied Marcas, quietly. "In that way I can't retreat any more than you can."

"I never retreat. But as for you, little one, I warn you that you will go over the edge like a billiard-ball hit too hard."

"We shall see! Let us go into the room again. The foils are there. You have three seconds. I have two. That is more than we need. Do you remember our agreement?"

"Yes, little one, I do. You saw that we let those two fellows, whom I've made ready for the infirmary, go off. You can go too, when your account is settled, if you are able to go. But don't venture to tell the police that I wounded you. If you play me such a trick as that, my men and I will soon be on your track."

"Don't be afraid! If your men prove as discreet as myself no one will ever know what has taken place here. Now, let us make an end of this; I am in a hurry."

"I'm not. I am quite comfortable here, but no matter! I will give you a thrust as you insist upon it. Be easy. I won't make you wait. Come, you fellows!" added the corporal, addressing his men, who were still playing the part of mutes.

Marcas, as soon as he reappeared in the billiard-room, was approached by the two sub-officers, who begged of him not to fight. They represented to him that it might cost the Carbonari dear if he did, for if any one were killed the affair would make a stir, and the police would search for the culprit. Marcas listened, but he was under the influence of anger, a kind of cold-blooded anger, so to speak, which only an act of violence could calm. He had, besides, gone too far to draw back, and as the quartermaster insisted that the danger was great and that the Swiss would undoubtedly wound him seriously, he replied: "You are mistaken, my friend. That big rascal is a very poor fencer. I have been watching his play, and now I know it. He, on the contrary, knows nothing of my style and won't until I stretch him on the floor."

"Ahem!" said the sergeant, "his arms and legs are simply endless."

"You will see what his legs and arms are worth when we are on the table. But you must prevent his men from coming near enough to annoy me and prevent me from fighting as I like. And when everything is over, make off without losing a moment."

"But if you are wounded?"

"I sha'n't be, I tell you, and shall be ready to start. Put on your shakos and jackets so as to be ready when you want to make off."

The two men, seeing their friend so sure of success, did not further try to dissuade him. They were not sorry at the prospect of avenging their two comrades by giving a good lesson to the insolent foreigner who had disabled them.

"Well, my little Frenchman!" called out the corporal, "as you are so anxious to have a straight thrust, what makes you wait?"

"Don't be impatient! Here I am!" said Marcas, taking up the weapon which the last fencer had let fall. And he added, between his teeth: "I know all about your straight thrusts. Those are the only ones you know, and I will arrange matters so that you can't make any!"

The Swiss already held his weapon and climbed on to the table, upon which Marcas sprang with a bound. The student was as agile as his adversary was tall. The billiard-tables then in use were much longer than those now in fashion, and indeed the one upon which the two antagonists were about to fight was long enough to allow them to measure swords at the usual distance. They could also make thrusts of the usual length, and even advance, but they could not retreat or step aside.

The green cloth which they stood upon looked like turf, but it was not slippery, and this was a great advantage. The adversaries took their position upon this strange arena, each with his left foot against the edge of the table. Both look composed, although the Swiss did not seem as cool as when he had been fighting on the floor. He stood on guard stamping and making mocking remarks in his usual way. "Little one! little one!" said he, imitating the voice of a farmer's wife calling her chickens.

But Marcas did not reply to this polite invitation. He had drawn himself up with his arm half bent and his eye upon his enemy, and he seemed determined to wait till he was attacked.

"You won't come, then?" resumed the corporal; "I must come after you, must I? Take care! If I come you will be spitted at once unless you jump off."

"I shall not jump off, and I am waiting for you," replied the student, without stirring.

"All right!" cried the Swiss, "make ready to swallow steel!" And with a single stride he came upon his antagonist with the point of his foil forward. This was precisely what Marcas had expected, and he was quite ready to meet him. Instead of parrying the straight thrust which the corporal had begun with, he suddenly stooped and the sword merely grazed his shoulder. And at the same moment he took a step forward so that his enemy would have to recoil to touch him, for they were almost close together. This strange manœuvre at first disconcerted the Swiss; it deprived him of the advantage which the length of his arm gave him. Upon an ordinary surface he would soon have reassumed his position by recoiling but he did not dare to have recourse to such tactics for fear of coming against the edge of the table as he sprang back, and stumbling.

Then, there began a hand-to-hand encounter such as is absolutely forbidden by the rules of fencing. The corporal, who was taller than Marcas by a whole head, tried to wound him in the ribs, but the student defended himself skilfully and his parries were all in good time. It was evident that the position could not be held for long by either of the fencers, that they could not wound one another as long as it lasted, and that the decisive thrusts would be given when a change took place. The seconds who looked on at this fight, which was as irregular as it was fierce, seemingly wished to bring it to a close, and it was clearly their duty to interfere. The two non-commissioned officers especially were greatly disturbed, and the sergeant was the first to call out: "Enough!"

"Come down, people ought not to fight upon a billiard-table!" exclaimed the quartermaster.

The soldiers in red said nothing, but they had ceased laughing.

The antagonists, however, were now each making ready for a recoil,

which was difficult of execution, as may be imagined. Victory must necessarily be on the side of the man, who, profiting by the short interval when the hand-to-hand struggle ceased, would manage to give a dexterous thrust. The Swiss intended to give an oblique one downwards, thus taking advantage of his height, but Marcas had another plan, which he executed with marvellous skill and irresistible rapidity. He suddenly bent over so as almost to crouch down and then at the very moment when his adversary, no longer finding anyone in front of him, was recoiling a step, in order to gain a little ground and pin him down, he quickly rose and made an upward thrust which transpierced the corporal's right eye.

The unfortunate man fell back. He had been struck with such violence that he fell from the billiard table, and would have had his brains dashed out upon the floor had not his men caught him in their arms. This did not save his life, however, for the foil had gone through the eyeball, penetrated the skull, and its point had then broken off.

"He is dead?" exclaimed the Frenchmen and the Swiss in one breath.

Marcas knew that this was the case, for he was sure of the murderous thrust which he had resorted to, and which he kept for great emergencies. He did not pretend to shew any compunction, and indeed he felt none. His anger was satisfied, he became calm once more and thought only of escaping. "Be off at once!" he said to the soldiers of the 45th.

They were trying to assist the Swiss soldiers in reviving the poor devil of a corporal who was now past all help, and Marcas was obliged to repeat his warning, to which he added a few words in a whisper to remind them of their duty to the brotherhood. They then made up their minds to obey. The moment was a favourable one, for the foreign soldiers were kneeling round the body of their compatriot and no longer noticed what was going on. So the quartermaster and the sergeant went noiselessly away.

Marcas, to do him justice, acted on this occasion like a captain left upon a shipwrecked vessel. He dressed himself without showing too much haste, and he was about to leave in his turn, when one of the Swiss soldiers tried to seize him by the collar of his coat. But the student slipped aside, being more agile than the phlegmatic Helvetian, and darted into the garden calling out to the dead man's comrades: "If you run after me, or arrest me, I will say that you fought with soldiers and picked the quarrel with them yourselves."

This declaration had a great effect upon the bewildered Swiss; he stopped short, and Marcas succeeded in running into the tavern, where the landlord was lamenting. "I am ruined!" cried he. "The police will shut up my place!"

"No," said Marcas, hurriedly. "The Swiss will say nothing, and the soldiers of the 45th will be silent also. They are too much afraid of being punished. When the police come, do as I previously told you to do. Tell them that the thrust was given by a man whom you don't know."

And, thereupon, without awaiting the landlord's reply, he slipped into the street, and keeping close to the wall ran towards the Rue des Fossés Saint-Victor. At a hundred paces from the *King Clovis*, there began an abrupt slope down which he darted at full speed.

He did right to make haste, for scarcely had he disappeared when one of the Swiss guards darted from the tavern, more for the purpose of seeking aid, however, than with an idea of pursuing the fugitive. Some persons were coming from the direction of Sainte-Geneviève, persons who had not remarked Marcas, and who, besides, had barely caught sight of him from

afar. But they soon gathered around the red-coat who was shouting to them, gesticulating and asking where a doctor could be found.

There were some students among the party. The crowd in front of the Law School had been dispersed by the gendarmes, and the rioters, tired of the disturbance by this time, were going quietly home. Des Loquetières had remained till the end of the riot, and had not lost his time, for among these noisy youths—and urging them on—he had recognised some people who stood high in the liberal party, and one of these was a well-known deputy. Satisfied with his day's work, he now decided to betake himself to the Place Royale, wishing to pay his friend, Saint-Hélier, a visit. He no longer thought of Marcas.

However, to reach the Pont de la Tournelle, it was necessary that he should pass in front of the *King Clovis*. Seeing a fresh gathering round the door, he drew near and listened to what was being said. It precisely happened that a medical student was offering his services to the Swiss soldier, who was finishing his narrative concerning the sad condition of his corporal. Des Loquetières, hearing that a duel had taken place within four walls, at once thought that it must be a political affair, and followed the people who were going in. The dead man lay upon the billiard-table where his comrades had placed him.

"There is nothing to do now but to bury him," said the student, after examining the body. "The foil penetrated the eye and the skull. At least an inch of the steel broke off and is lodged in his brain."

"Oho!" thought Des Loquetières, "that is the very same sort of wound as that which killed Count Henri de Brouage. At last I have a clue!"

IX.

FOR the past two months, Fabien de Brouage had barely existed. After going through the painful test of the mock trial, the order to leave Paris had been a cruel blow, more terrible to him than the thought of death, to which he had resigned himself. To go away without seeing Stella again, and without writing to her, or knowing whether he would ever see her again! Ah! certainly this sad necessity required a hundred times more fortitude than was needed to brave the fire of a platoon.

There were two men in Fabien: one was the dreamy fanatic who thought he would contribute to the regeneration of the world by conspiring against the government of his country, the believer in Utopian ideas, the gentleman who scrupulously kept his oaths, however lightly taken; and, the other, the impassioned lover ready to sacrifice everything to the object of his passion. By a strange, or rather a fatal chance, the lover and the conspirator in his nature had, for a season, not interfered with one another. Fabien had loved and conspired at one and the same time.

The viscount, as a member of the Coral Pin Association, had thought that, without failing in his duty as a Carbonaro, he was free to love the beautiful Italian who was the soul of the conspiracy. He had enjoyed the same good fortune as the noblemen of the Fronde, who mingled love and politics together, and had an adored woman as their accomplice. He did not know that the grandmaster was the lawful husband of Stella Negroni, but hoped that the day would come when Hernandez would give up what he fancied to be a passing whim to think of the sacred cause of liberty alone. He also hoped that Stella would be touched by his attachment, and would

end by loving him—Fabien—who only lived for her. But light had suddenly burst upon him. When, after congratulating him upon the heroism he had shown when facing the platoon apparently about to fire upon him, the old leader of the *venta* had told him that in a few hours' time he must set out for Brouage, the viscount had realised that he was sent away for some other reason besides that of landing the treasure of the Carbonari. He guessed whence the idea had started, and considered that the Spaniard wished to exile a rival. Still, he had not hesitated to obey unconditionally and without even questioning the man who had given him the grandmaster's orders.

What good would it have done to resist or even to hesitate? The result would have been ruin, the removal of the last chance of seeing Stella again. He had just learned that the police suspected the baroness and her niece, that they had suddenly left the house in the Rue de Monsieur and were hiding themselves. How could he find them? His connection with Hernandez did not authorise him to ask any questions. The grandmaster might question the members, but he did not allow himself to be interrogated by them. So Fabien would merely lose his time, and it was better to try to deserve the grandmaster's confidence by passive obedience. The exile to which he was condemned, could not last forever, and on his return, he would certainly have greater facilities for seeing Stella, or at least for finding out what the Spaniard had done with her.

Fabien set out at the given hour without departing from any of the orders transmitted to him. On the Orleans road, half-way between the Barrière d'Enfer and Montrouge, he found a post-chaise in readiness; a man unknown to him was waiting, and handed him a large amount of money in gold and gave him a few supplementary instructions, which delighted him. They indeed authorised him to return to Paris as soon as the treasures were disembarked and placed in a safe spot, in the charge of a person who would soon arrive at Brouage. This person was not named, but with a lover's ready fancy, the viscount at once imagined that the Spaniard would not confide this delicate mission to any one but Stella.

After a journey, the dulness of which was cheered by hope, Fabien arrived at the farm, where he found some servants who were devoted to him and to the cause in which he was interested. Recruited in this part of the country where the Bourbons had fewer partisans than the Emperor and even than the Republic, they were earnest conspirators and laborious farmers at one and the same time. They knew no master but Fabien, and when Count René visited the domain which belonged to him equally with his brother, they received him almost as a stranger. These peasants were not Carbonari, however—the Carbonari were mainly recruited among the middle-classes—but they belonged to a similar association. They were Knights of Liberty, like many of the working-men and country folks, malcontents who secretly laboured to bring back the tri-colour flag, and who on a Sunday sang Béranger's seditious song:

“ When shall my eager hand shake off,
The dust that dims its noble hues ? ”

To hasten the advent of the great day when the dust would be shaken off, they conspired and displayed remarkable zeal in seconding their young master's efforts. Some of them who had been sailors, undertook to pilot the brig, manned by a crew of Italian Carbonari, and to bring it safely into an anchorage they selected. The farm and the ruined château were situated on the coast at only a few hundred yards from the sea. One night,

the treasure was landed without difficulty and placed in a subterranean vault under the only tower that had been left standing after a siege in the days of the League.

On the day after the landing had been successfully effected, Fabien had the pleasure of seeing the Barouess de Casanova arrive, disguised as a peasant-woman of Saintonge. The baroness was a born conspirator, and well knew how to comport herself in the most trying situations. Orso, it is true, had helped her by procuring her a suitable disguise, and by minutely explaining what she would have to do. However, she had so fully entered into the spirit of her part, that she might claim a large share in the success of this improvised comedy. She had travelled by coach as far as Rochefort, and on the road she had adroitly contrived to find out from her travelling companions all about the province where she pretended she had been born, and whither she was returning, she said, to visit some wealthy relatives after an absence of thirty years. From Rochefort to the farm she had gone on foot, and to find her way she had merely had to question the shepherds. The viscount introduced her to the farmers, who received her very cordially, and as soon as they found themselves alone, he plied her with questions; for he conjectured that she must have fresh orders to transmit to him, and hoped that he would hear something about Stella from her. This was not the case, however. The baroness told him that having left Paris in great haste, in obedience to the grandmaster's orders, she had not seen Signora Negroni and was entirely ignorant of her whereabouts. She only knew that she had escaped the police and was in safety somewhere abroad, and would not return to France till the Carbonari had everything their own way. Francesca believed that she was telling the truth, besides, she only repeated what the Prince of Catanzaro had said to her, two hours before her departure, in the little house at Passy. She was very discreet, so she told Fabien nothing whatever as to the double life led by Stella, or as to her birth, her marriage with Orso, and the house in the Rue du Rocher.

She failed to notice his look of consternation, at learning that Stella Negroni had left France, but proceeded to tell him other things. She informed him that she had been sent to Brouage to relieve him of the custody of the treasure, and this was good news to the viscount, who was anxious to return to Paris. The baroness was sent to take his place in every way, to watch over the treasure, to give orders to the farmers, who were instructed to pass her off as a relative, to write to Fabien and receive fresh orders through him. Peasants, who were almost completely illiterate, could not be asked to write, and, on the other hand, the master of the Coral Pin Association, did not wish to keep up the correspondence himself. Communications from Brouage and orders from Paris would thus pass through the hands of Francesca and Fabien; they were to write under assumed names, and to take other precautions, such as conspirators commonly make use of.

Fabien was authorised to leave as soon as he had fittingly installed the baroness at the farm. This did not take long. Giacomo Ranese, the baroness's defunct husband, had fought under Murat. Francesca had spent her youth among French people, and although she was somewhat dark for a Frenchwoman, she still might pass for one, for she spoke without an accent, and was also lively and witty. She pleased the farmers at once, and soon accustomed herself to country life, taking care of the garden, gathering the fruit, and feeding the chickens. In fact she knew how to suit herself to all ways of life, and did not shrink from passing a few mouths

at Brouage. She missed card-playing to a certain extent, but she would have made much greater sacrifices than the relinquishing of *bouillotte* to serve the man who had risked his life in attempting to save Captain Ranese, when the latter was captured by the Austrians. She only regretted Cecilia d'Ascoli; still she consoled herself for her absence by saying to herself that her dear friend ran no risk, and that she would soon see her again.

Fabien was thus able to depart, after remaining a week at Brouage, and towards the middle of March he was again in Paris. His first duty was to give an account of his journey and its results to the grandmaster. He could no longer see him, as formerly, in Madame de Casanova's rooms, and had to solicit an interview through a delegate of the high *venta*, for it was absolutely forbidden for the brethren to visit the house of Don Hernandez in the Faubourg St. Honoré. As it happened, Fabien and Orso met one evening at nightfall in the Allée des Veuves, then but little frequented.* Orso was grave but cordial. He praised the viscount for the zeal and courage which he had shown, and told him that the decisive moment was delayed, for, the police having started on their scent, the chiefs of the Carbonari wished to defer the signal for action. Meantime, the viscount had merely to be in readiness either to take up arms or to start once more for Brouage, and bring back all or a part of the treasure. After having thus given his orders, Orso anticipated a question which Fabien had hesitated to ask. He told him that Signora Negroni, having been tracked by a spy, had fled, first to England, and then taken passage from London to the United States.

This news, which the lover had not anticipated, filled him with the deepest grief. America, in 1821, was not as now, an eleven days' journey from France. Months were needed to go and to return. Stella, on the other side of the Atlantic, was lost to Fabien, who fell into rage and despair. His situation was atrocious. Absence only increased his love, and he saw himself condemned never to behold the object of his affection any more; moreover, he had not even the consolation of talking about her, for he confided in no one, keeping his sad secret to himself. And, as an additional misfortune, he was reduced to utter idleness, as the Carbaroni had orders not to act.

He spent his time in playing cards all night to deaden his mental anguish, while by daylight he wandered about Paris in the vague hope of hearing something of Stella. He fancied that the baroness's Italian servants might not all have left Paris. He had not ventured to ask the leader of the brotherhood what had become of them, but chance might throw one of them in his way. However, this did not happen, and he no longer counted upon such a piece of luck.

One fine evening, in the month of May, having dined alone, according to his usual custom, he directed his steps towards the Palais Royal, then the real centre of Paris. All melancholy men are not disposed to promenade their sadness through gloomy woods and lonely places, which merely feed one's grief. Fabien was a man of violent and excessive feelings, passing quickly from the deepest despair to outbursts of fictitious gaiety. He sought for noise, bustle, and danger, just as an old man seeks the sunlight. He would have liked to pick a quarrel every day, to risk his life for a jest's

* Now-a-days the Avenue Montaigne. It was originally called the Allée des Veuves or Widows' Lane, on account of its being a gloomy, secluded spot, suited to the sorrowful meditations of widows. However, when M. Mabille established his famous dancing garden there, it speedily changed in character.—*Trans.*

sake, and lose all he possessed in an hour's time at the gambling-table ; in fact, he longed for some excitement, such as would enable him to think no more of his troubles. But he only found peaceable men in his way ; fortune smiled upon him, and nothing of an exciting character occurred to rouse him from his gloomy thoughts.

He started out every evening in search of something to rouse him, but was always baffled. And by the irony of fate, he who had been a constant loser now won every time that he played at a gaming-table. He was reckless in vain, making the most absurd ventures ; it did not matter, he came home every night with his pockets full of gold. He had become the terror of croupiers, and the idol of timid players, who invariably betted upon the colour he selected, and thus won from the bank like himself. His luck came at last to the ears of the "farmer-general" of games of chance, the famous Boursault, one of the most singular men of his time. He was a descendant of Boursault, the poet and dramatic author who was the sworn foe of Molière and Boileau. His father had been a wealthy cloth-merchant in the Quartier des Innocents, and he himself had figured on the stage before the Revolution, showing such talent that he came near succeeding Lekain at the Théâtre Français. In 1793 he became the manager of a theatre where revolutionary plays were produced, and was also elected a member of the National Convention. Under the Directory he had farmed the scavenger service in Paris as well as the public gaming-tables ; and he was still at the head of both services under Louis XVIII., possessing a fortune of several millions, a princely house, with marvellous gardens, and a very well-known picture-gallery. His name, inscribed at the corner of a street opened in 1830 on the site of his magnificent abode, is all that now remains to recall him in Paris.

Boursault felt interested on hearing of Fabien de Brouage's various victories, and he witnessed some of the games which the viscount played at the Cercle des Étrangers, Frascati's or the Maison Marivaux, or, again, at the Maison Dunans, in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, and in such rooms at the Palais Royal as were used at the time for the purpose. But in vain did the farmer-general repair to the battle-field, the bank was invariably beaten. However, Boursault, when he had attentively watched his antagonist, came to the conclusion that he was playing to divert his mind from some love affair rather than from a passion for card-playing or winning money. He rightly considered that he would soon cease to care for play, and so he did not fear him.

Besides, Fabien, in giving himself up to *trente-et-quarante* as he was doing, in one way acted very wisely. The police had long watched the Viscount de Brouage, having been told to do so by Loquetières, who had noticed his intimacy with the pretended niece of the suspicious baroness. They had, however, taken no notice of his journey to Saintonge, for they knew that he often went there to sell a few acres of land when in want of money. On his return they watched him carefully, but his conduct baffled them ; and they came to look upon him merely as a sort of mad-cap who was leading a fast life and had no notion of conspiring. As a rule, gamblers and lovers keep peace with the government, and Fabien's case was quite exceptional.

His gambling successes served to keep him from want for a time. The estate at Brouage, frittered away and mortgaged, could not long suffice to supply his needs. It was fortunate that René did not ask for his share of the income derived from the property, for his brother could not have given

him an account of it. Still the day was perhaps not far off when René would altogether quarrel with his uncle on account of Octavie, and he might then wish to dispose of his portion of the estate which Fabien was in no position to purchase. This state of things prevented the viscount from going to see his elder brother, although he was really attached to him. He feared that René would ask him for an explanation, which he did not wish to give; and he particularly dreaded, lest his brother should go to Brouage where he would make some extremely strange discoveries. He thus avoided all chance of meeting him, frequenting places where the young count was never seen.

The Palais Royal was one of them. Quiet people never visited that caravansary of pleasure. They scarcely even dared to go there to taste the famous cookery at Véry's and the Frères Provençaux. People no longer met the ex-Chancellor Cambacérès, who, under the Empire, had never failed to stroll about the galleries with his faithful Aigrefeuille, the well-known epicure, and other parasites. However, the wooden galleries, gambling-rooms and cafés, were always thronged with a motley crowd with which Fabien did not hesitate to mingle.

On the night in question, tired of always winning, and not over-anxious to make his appearance at the gambling-table, the idea occurred to him to go into a café to see whether he could not find either a friend to talk to, or an enemy to quarrel with. He might find either the one or the other, for at that time every establishment had its politicians, and excepting a few country people behind the times, no one went to take refreshment haphazard, but had a fixed place of resort.

The Café de Valois was frequented only by the Chevaliers of Saint-Louis and the body guards, the natural defenders of throne and altar. The Café de Foy was patronised by the liberals, the citizens who were readers of Voltaire, and the old revolutionists, who had drawn in their claws, so as not to frighten the partisans of constitutional rule. The Café Lemblin, better known and more frequented than either of the former, had two distinct sets of customers. In the morning, writers and actors mainly went there. Jay, Jouy, and other men of classical tendencies, there sat side by side with the romantic Ballanche, the amiable Boieldieu, and the witty Brillat-Savarin. Martainville, the journalist, often went there, simply to engage in discussions with fellow press-men and defy them. In the evening, however, the room where these wits were in the habit of holding forth, became the head quarters of the Bonapartist officers, especially of such as were fond of duelling. This special feature of the Café Lemblin had originated on the arrival of the allies in 1814. The Russians and Prussians who appeared in the café, had had the stools flung at them by the soldiers who had recently defended Belleville and Clichy. In the following year, the imperialists had given battle to the royal musketeers, who had tried to place the King's bust by force above the bar. In 1821, there was no more fighting in the establishment, for the regular customers kept out all intruders, but the royalists who ventured there, seldom went away without having a meeting on hand for the following day in the Bois de Vincennes.

The Viscount de Brouage, being in search of diversion and excitement, went first to the Café de Valois, where he thought he was likely to meet some military royalists. But he only saw some old *émigrés*, who were drinking chocolate, and reading the *White Flag*. One of them recognised him from having seen him formerly at his uncle, the marquis's house, and

knowing that Fabien was out of favour, on account of his political opinions, he turned his back on him in a somewhat marked manner.

Fabien would have liked to call him to account for this impertinent avoidance, but how could he attack a man of seventy, who had his hair dressed in a style called the "Royal Bird," and who tottered about on legs like pipe-stems, encased in watered-silk stockings? He restrained himself, for fear of yielding to his anger, and went off. The Café Lemblin was but two steps away, in the Galerie de Chartres, but he did not enjoy himself when there. The customers of this military club—for such it seemed—had a noisy style, which was not in harmony with his frame of mind. So he went across the garden, and despairing of meeting with any adventure, he entered the Café de Foy with the praiseworthy intention of perusing the papers.

He found some worthy citizens there, who were sipping cups of coffee, and commenting upon the political intelligence. The *Constitutionnel* was in every hand, and its leading article served as a starting point for lively discussions.

Chance willed it that the viscount sat down beside a group of national guards of the 6th Legion, who had been feasting at one of the restaurants in the Palais Royal, in honour of the promotion of their captain, a rich wood-merchant, whom the King had made a chevalier of the Legion of Honour. Among them was Boulardot, the druggist, also a corporal in the national guard, and Brassicourt, the saddler, formerly in the 9th dragoons.

Fabien was not aware that his two neighbours had arrested his brother some two months before, for carrying the sedan-chair, in which Henri's corpse had been placed, and he did not notice them at first; however, a name which they suddenly mentioned, made him listen to their conversation, while holding a newspaper before him in order to appear indifferent to their talk.

"Well, Brassicourt," exclaimed the corporal, "will you persist in saying that we enjoy the blessings of equality when we see a citizen defying justice, just because he happens to be the Count de Brouage, and his uncle is a peer of France?"

"There you go again! Daddy Boulardot!" replied Brassicourt, "you maintain that the young man killed his cousin; it's your hobby, I know, but it's sheer nonsense!"

"I do maintain it! I maintained it before the judges. They would not listen to me, and the guilty man is free instead of being in prison. I met him yesterday on the Place Royale."

"That was because he had something to do there. Who knows! Perhaps he was looking for the street where he met the murderer who accosted him!"

"You believe that falsehood then, do you? You must have very little sense. I tell you that the affair has been hushed up."

"Oh! it wasn't the general who hushed it up. I know him well. I served in his regiment in the *other one's* time. He can't be trifled with, not he! If his nephew had killed his son, he might not have allowed him to be tried, but he would have blown out his brains."

Fabien listened to all this with mingled astonishment and anger. He did not know that René had been suspected, and he was greatly irritated to hear these fellows discussing his brother's innocence.

"Brassicourt, you grieve me!" resumed the corporal. "You don't

understand anything about the matter, and I was altogether wrong in following your advice on the night when we arrested the count. If I had taken him at once to the police-station, as I wished to do, the influence of the high and mighty would not have been brought into play to stop the proceedings. You are the cause of my failing in my duty as a soldier and as a citizen."

"Console yourself, Boulardot, the police would have let him go, as there was not a shadow of proof."

"Not a shadow of proof! Hadn't he every interest in committing the crime, as he is the heir to the title? This is the consequence of the laws that favour the aristocracy. And will you kindly tell me why the count and the police never could, or rather never would, find the place where the deed was done? A garden and a high wall are not to be found at every street corner."

"True. They must be very stupid. I never looked for it, but I have business in that neighbourhood, and no one will take it out of my head but what the deed was done in the old buildings of the Temple."

"That cannot be," said Boulardot, hastily. "Those buildings have not been tenanted since the Revolution."

"That is all the more reason, for if they were—"

"Gentlemen," interrupted a third national guard, "you will never agree together, and I propose that we should talk about something else. Have you read the story of the 'Woman with the Death's-head' in the *Constitutionnel*?"

"No, I haven't," replied Brassicourt. "What can the woman with the death's-head be?"

"What! don't you know?" replied the national guard. "For the past week she has been the talk of all Paris."

"Do you believe in such nonsense as that?" exclaimed Boulardot.

"It is all here in the *Constitutionnel*."

"It is a good paper, written in a proper spirit, I admit," said Boulardot, gravely; "but the newspaper stories are not always true."

"Oh, you deny everything, because you have read Voltaire! Didn't you maintain the other day that there was no such thing as the great sea-serpent?"

"And I say so now! Buffon says nothing of any such reptile."

The corporal confounded Buffon with Lacépède, but, all the same, his learning produced a certain effect on his subordinates.

"A woman with a death's-head could not be alive," judiciously remarked the ex-dragon.

"Of course not, for she couldn't eat," maintained the national guard.

"But it appears from the paper that it isn't that exactly."

"Read us the account," said Brassicourt.

"Willingly. You will see. It is very curious."

Fabien no longer listened to the conversation, now that it ran upon this absurd story, which would nowadays be called a hoax. But he thought over what he had heard relating to his cousin's death. Two things had struck him. First, that René was suspected, and he asked himself whether he ought not to inform his brother of the rumours abroad respecting him. Secondly, one of the national guards had spoken of the old buildings of the Temple as the scene of the encounter which had cost Henri his life—the spot where he, Fabien, had gone through so terrible a test—and the other guard had seemed somewhat confused when his comrade had spoken of this place.

While M. de Brouage was trying to understand the meaning of all the disjointed talk which he had heard, the man who held the *Constitutionnel* had settled himself in his chair, put on a pair of gold spectacles, and begun to read as follows: "Never has Paris witnessed a more extraordinary phenomenon than the one now to be met within its walls. The Hottentot Venus sinks into insignificance. A young lady, wealthy and of a most beautiful figure, has just arrived here from her native country, which is said to be the island of Malta. She is not more than twenty-two, and has been an orphan from her infancy. She has an income of several hundreds of thousand francs, but she has never yet been able to find a husband, although she is well educated and intelligent, and comes of a most respectable family. She has now left her native country in the hope of finding a man willing to console her, by marrying her, for the cruelty shown to her by nature. The unfortunate creature was born with a hideous face which precisely resembles a death's-head. The sight is so appalling that since her childhood Mademoiselle X—— has been obliged to wear a mask of black velvet, which enables her to go about without horrifying all those she meets. It is stated that she never allows any of her maids to see her when she is at her toilet, and that so as not to catch sight of her own face, she has had all the mirrors removed from the magnificent house which she has taken in the Faubourg du Roule. So strange a misfortune has necessarily attracted the attention of our learned men. Several members of the Académie de Médecine asked for permission to examine her face, but she has refused to grant it, not wishing to be the subject of scientific controversy. However, she fully understands that in Paris where the police regulations are so strict, the wearing of a mask at any time, excepting during the carnival, cannot be tolerated without due cause, and so she has consented to allow Dr. Verdon to examine her face. This gentleman, who belongs to the medical staff of the Prefecture of Police, has stated that the monstrosity really exists, although he cannot determine its cause. It is supposed that the mother of this young lady may have been terrified by the sight of a skeleton. At all events it is certain that the 'woman with the death's-head' is very rich. She proposes, it is said, to settle a million on the man who will have the courage to marry her. It is to be hoped that she may meet with suitors among various young men who, not being the favourites of fortune, might make a meritorious sacrifice to enrich themselves. Meantime, Mademoiselle X—— is the victim of public curiosity. Having appeared at various theatres, in a private box, she has been surrounded, both on her arrival and departure, and has had a deal of trouble to reach her carriage. It is to be, hoped however, for the honour of French hospitality, that this indelicate curiosity will soon be put a stop to. It is said that Mademoiselle X—— succeeded in being present at the last entertainment at the Beaujon garden without being too rudely jostled, and that, encouraged by this change in the behaviour of the Parisians, she intends to visit all the places of amusement to which strangers usually resort during the season."

"Is that all?" asked Brassicourt, seeing that his companion had laid the newspaper upon the table.

"It ought to be enough—a death's-head, just fancy! It is enough to make one shudder even to think of such a thing," replied the reader.

"And you believe all that?" said Boulardot, scornfully. "It is absurd that any newspaper should spread such statements as those in this enlightened age. I shall write to the editor to-morrow."

"What do you mean by that?" exclaimed one of the guardsmen. "I saw the woman with the death's-head myself, only last week at the Variétés. They were playing the *Bear and the Pacha* that night."

"You mean that you saw a woman with a mask, but you didn't see her face. And if you want me to tell you the truth, I think that story has been got up by the police."

"Boulardot is right," insisted another guard, "it may be a trick of the police."

"What stuff!" exclaimed Brassicourt. "You see the hand of the police in everything."

"I see it wherever it is," replied Boulardot sententiously. "Didn't you hear that a physician belonging to the police service had been sent to examine the woman about whom all this fuss is being made?"

"Dr. Verdon is the man. I know him—he bought a set of harness of me; he is a friend of Manuel's, and attends Benjamin Constant."

"That is in order to deceive people. A man who has acquaintance with the police can't be upright."

"It's nothing to me. But, if I were not married already, I should make up to the woman with the death's-head at once."

"Brassicourt, you really distress me. I knew that you were credulous, but I did not fancy that you were unprincipled."

"My principles don't admit of my despising a million."

"I will take the *Constitutionnel*, if you have done with it, sir," said one of the frequenters of the café, who had risen to obtain possession of the paper.

The national guard, who had his elbow upon the paper from which he had been reading the entertaining account of the woman with the death's-head, made haste to offer it, and the polite admirer of the *Constitutionnel* returned to his seat carrying it in his hand.

Fabien had not previously noticed this customer, who had been seated in a corner of the room, but he recognized him as he came near. The slightest incidents of the evening on which he had told his love to Stella were impressed upon his mind, and he suddenly remembered having seen this man, for an instant, near the door of the boudoir when he was making his declaration to the beautiful Italian. He also remembered that the grand-master of the Coral Pin had recently told him that this man was a spy who had slipped into the baroness's house, and he knew that the result of his coming had been the desertion of the little mansion in the Rue de Monsieur and the departure of Stella Negroni. The meeting was an annoying one, and the viscount did not care to remain in a place where a spy sat opposite to him.

Des Loquetières—for it was really he who was indulging in a glass of punch and reading the *Constitutionnel*—did not, however, notice the various persons in the room, not even the Viscount de Brouage. Since seeing Fabien play at dice-throwing in Madame de Casanova's rooms, Des Loquetières was convinced that he was an inveterate gambler, only conspiring for amusement, and that it was idle to arrest him. He had gone to the Café de Foy as he was in the habit of doing every evening merely to listen to the talkative liberals, so as to be able to report what was said to his superiors at the Prefecture of Police. Des Loquetières worked even when taking his punch.

However, he never ventured to enter the Café Lemblin, where the Bonapartist officers did not tolerate any suspicious-looking characters. On that evening, besides, he had other cares in his mind. He had just sent in a

report concerning the death of the Swiss corporal, and was planning a scheme for discovering the duellist who made it a practice to give his antagonists a deadly thrust in the eye. The comrades of the Swiss corporal had said nothing about the soldiers of the 45th, and they could not tell who Marcas was, as he was unknown to them. Griffard had taken good care not to betray him, but the landlord was under suspicion, and measures had been adopted to ensure the murderer's arrest if he dared to show himself at the *King Clovis*. Now, Des Loquetières intended to perfect these measures by a skilful inquiry, and he let Fabien leave the café without thinking of following him.

The viscount, in haste to get away, went up the Galerie Montpensier bound for the gambling-rooms at No. 36, where he meant to spend the rest of the evening. He was not, however, so very disposed to play. The stupid talk he had heard still dwelt in his mind. He remembered the mention of the Temple, made by Brassicourt, and he thought that the citizen soldier's conjectures might be correct, for it was assuredly some member of the Coral Pin Association who had killed Henri de Brouage. As for the article in the *Constitutionnel*, he only remembered Dr. Verdon's name, and the fact that there was a young woman in the city who habitually wore a mask. Although Dr. Verdon gave out royalist opinions, and was often employed as a physician by the police, he was really a Carbonaro and belonged to the *venta* over which Fabien presided, so that the latter knew him very well. As for the story of the masked woman, the viscount was not the man to think of making advances to the poor creature afflicted with a death's-head, but he reflected that Stella Negroni might have remained in Paris, instead of crossing the Atlantic, if only the idea had occurred to her of hiding her face with a mask. In the midst of his reflections, and while he was going carelessly along towards the gambling-house, he was brushed against by a man who was coming out of the wooden galleries. Fabien was on the point of protesting, for he was out of sorts, when he recognized Colonel Fournès, the retired officer, who, on sitting down at the card-table in the baroness's drawing-room, had put Des Loquetières to flight.

"I am charmed to meet you," said Fournès, who stood as high as a Carbonaro as he had stood in the old army, "for I have several things to tell you that you will be interested in hearing. Give me your arm and let us go towards the boulevard."

Fabien had great esteem for Colonel Fournès, although he did not share his ideas as an imperialist. He knew, however, that Carbonarism had no better supporter than this brilliant officer, who on the day of action would ensure complete victory by bringing over the army. Besides, Fournès had on all occasions shown him great personal friendliness.

"I think we should do as well not to follow the gallery, colonel," said the viscount, "although I shall be delighted to go with you. But I have come from the Café de Foy, where I found a spy, the man who got into Madame de Casanova's house one night."

"Ah! that Loquetières! You are right then, we had better not let him see us together, although I have long been living in such a quiet way that he has given up watching me. Let us turn towards the Théâtre Français. We can reach the boulevard by the Rue de Richelieu. Have you your evening to yourself?"

"I shall be delighted to spend it with you."

"That will be better than gambling, as you were going to do, eh?"

"Why should I deny it?" replied the viscount, with a smile.

"That's right! I like your frankness, and am not surprised at it, for I know you well. I even don't disapprove of play, up to a certain point. It is necessary for us to seem to be people who don't think of politics, so as to divert suspicion. You cannot think how well it has served me, since the affair of 1817, to pass half my time at the Café de la Régence. Formerly, I always had spies at my heels. Now, they leave me alone because they imagine that I have a passion for chess. I have learned to play it tolerably well, but I don't want to checkmate either Deschappelles or La Bourdonnais. Louis XVIII. is the King I aim at. You are right, then, in going to gambling-houses, as you have a taste that way, for you won't be suspected of conspiring. There is only one thing you ought to avoid."

"What is that?"

"Love, of course."

Fabien had not expected this reply, and he gave a start, which the colonel detected, for he was leaning on his arm. "Have I guessed your weak point?" said Fournès. "Oh, I don't want to pry into your secrets," he added, as the viscount remained silent. "Besides, I know that you have lately been put to a great test, and given proof of uncommon firmness in refusing to write to your lady-love when you thought that you were about to be shot."

"What! did they tell you that?"

"They told me everything, my dear friend. You are a real hero, and I wish that all the brethren of the Coral Pin were as courageous. But I am right in warning you. Women have ruined the noblest causes, and I don't know any one who could swear that he would not be influenced by them. Men of stronger minds than yours have sacrificed duty to infatuations, and I need not look very far to find an example of what I say."

"I confess that I am at a loss to know what you allude to," said Fabien, although his lover's instinct warned him that he was about to hear Stella mentioned.

"My dear friend," said the colonel, "I might quote myself, for I have been in fault in that very way. In 1815, after the battle of Waterloo, I felt very bored as you may imagine, at not having any more fighting to do. I needed something to occupy my mind. We men of the old army had not yet had time to know where we were, and had not begun to conspire. So I took it into my head to fall in love, and I thought that I ran no risk. Well, it was at the house of the person in question, that Loquetières arrested me, in 1817."

"Had she betrayed you?"

"No. She idolized me. But she was a woman, and all women talk. She saw fit to tell a female friend that she was playing a part in a plot to bring back the Emperor. The friend had a lover as talkative as she herself was. But I don't know why I tell you this old story. Let me come to a later and more forcible example. In the first place, be assured that I should not even allude to it were you not the most intelligent, devoted, and reliable member of our Association. To any one else I should not speak of the weaknesses of our leader."

"What do you mean?" stammered Fabien, full of hope and anxiety at the same time.

"I mean," replied Fournès, "that Hernandez himself has yielded to an infatuation which has almost wrecked our sacred cause. Oh! I can excuse him. He is the founder of Carbonarism in France. When our friends, Dugied and Joubert, returned from Naples with the statutes of the brother

hood, they would have been powerless to establish it here if the Prince of Catanzero had not placed his immense fortune at their disposal. If we succeed in winning over the army, we shall owe it to him, for nothing can be done without money, and, without the treasures of the Italian Carbonari, we could not hope to overthrow the Bourbon Government. However, the treasure is our own now, as it is deposited in the vaults at Brouage, in your château, and I hope that it may be soon employed, for the day for action is approaching. It has so far been deferred through the fault of the grandmaster. Stella Negroni was suspected by the police; it was not her fault, I know that. It was that unfortunate duel, which cost your cousin his life, that set the spies at work, all of them—”

“Talking about that,” interrupted Fabien, “I must tell you that, just now, at the Café de Foy, some national guardsmen were speaking on the subject, and stupidly accused my brother René of having killed poor Henri. I came very near silencing them, but was fortunately able to restrain myself. Among the foolish things they said, I was struck by the remark that the fight had taken place in the old buildings of the Temple—”

“Where you came so near being shot,” said the colonel, smiling. “I don’t know whether the fellow was right or not. The sad affair is a complete mystery to me. The son of my old comrade, General de Brouage, did not trouble himself about us, and if he fell by the hand of one of the brethren, it must have been a personal revenge. But now I think of it, your cousin had been paying great attention to Stella Negroni for some time past.”

“Do you fancy that the prince—”

“I affirm nothing,” interrupted the colonel; “but only very few of us know that our headquarters are at the Temple, so if I had proof that Count Henri was killed in the convent garden, I should think that Hernandez, who is Stella’s lover, had rid himself of a rival.”

“It would be infamous!” exclaimed Fabien.

“No, it would be logical. Men who are desperately in love have laws of their own, and that brings me back to the example which I was mentioning just now. Hernandez, being madly in love with Stella Negroni, at first thought only of saving her. I must do him the justice to say that he took prompt and vigorous measures to repair the faults he had committed, and to ward off all danger from the Association. In a few hours the house in the Rue de Monsieur was vacated. The two women and the servants vanished like phantoms. No one has heard aught of them since that famous night. The Italians know very well how to manage such disappearances as this. However, it is none the less true that, owing to this sudden change, all action has been stopped for two months past. We are reduced to temporizing, now that all is ready, when the troops merely await the signal to display the tri-colour flag in the east and in the west. At La Rochelle, at Saumur, Poitiers, Nancy, Strasburg, Colmar, and Belfort, our brethren in the army are growing impatient. They will end by being tired out, and we are letting the moment pass for freeing our country. Why? Simply because our leader wished to place the object of his attachment and her companion in safety.”

“They are out of danger now; it is not on their account that the prince is abstaining from action.”

“Out of danger? How do you know that? The baroness is at Brouage, where you installed her. The high *venta* has been informed that this has been successfully accomplished. You correspond with Madame de Casanova

through a safe party. It is all done in the right way, although correspondence is dangerous now-a-days, when all suspicious letters invariably go through the 'Dark Room.' But where is Stella Negroni?"

"She is in America," said Fabien with a sigh.

"Did Hernandez tell you that?"

"Yes, at a very short interview I had with him after my return from Brouage."

"He told me so, also, but I doubt the truth of it."

"What?" exclaimed the viscount, "do you believe that Stella—that Signora Negroni has not left France?"

"I shouldn't be surprised if she were still in Paris."

Fabien again started, and in such a way that the colonel asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing—I was greatly surprised, but I feel sure you are wrong. It would be folly for our leader to keep her with him. All those who frequented the baroness's rooms know Signora Negroni's face. It is not one that can easily be forgotten. Supposing even that she is hiding, the prince must be watched, and if he sees her in secret the police must know it. No—it is impossible—she cannot be here."

"I hope she has really gone," said Fournès, quietly. "But I wish to make sure of it."

Fabien was dying to ask by what means he intended to do so, but fearing to betray his secret, he remained silent. The two conspirators had now reached the Rue de Richelieu and the younger one had not yet asked where the elder was taking him. When they reached Frascati, the palatial gambling-house, with its frontage extending to the spot on which the Rue Neuve-Vivienne was afterwards built, Fournès turned to the left and led the viscount towards the Madeleine. The Boulevard des Italiens, then called the Boulevard de Gand, was much less frequented and less noisy than now-a-days. It was gayer perhaps, however, for those who walked up and down there at certain hours belonged, almost all of them, to the same class of society, and only went there for pleasure's sake. There was no lack of fashionable restaurants there. The Café de Paris was not opened until the 15th of July of the following year, but Tortonì, the Café Hardy, which later became the Maison Dorée, and the Café Riche had long previously existed. The wits of 1821, said that a man had to be *rich* to dine at the Café Hardy, and *hardy* to dine at the Café Riche.

Fabien began to feel astonished at the colonel taking him to such a public place, but he remembered the theories which his master in conspiring had laid down, that it was the best of all stratagems to hide neither one's acts nor one's habits, and so he continued to follow him quietly. Fournès at last turned into the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, which, as a Bonapartist, he persisted in calling the Rue du Mont Blanc, just as he called the Rue Chantierine by the name of the Rue de la Victoire.

"It is time for me to tell you where I am taking you," he said at last to his companion.

"I must confess that I should like to know," replied the viscount.

"Well, then, we are going to the Tivoli Gardens."

"What! to the ball?"

"To the ball, the play, and many other things. They play this evening a new pantomime called 'Gringalot's Trials in the Island of Lanterns, and His Journey to the Moon.'"

"Dear me," stammered Fabien, in amazement, "I did not think that you were coming here to see a farce."

"My dear fellow, farces are good in their way. They make one forget tragedies. Besides, it is a delightful evening. There will be a crowd. Tivoli, Ranelagh and Beaujon are very fashionable this year, and fine ladies can show themselves there without inconvenience. I venture to say that we shall have some unexpected meetings under the trees in the garden."

"Do you think that we shall meet Signora Negroni?"

"I count upon nothing, but I expect everything."

"What would you do in such a case?"

"I do not know what I should do on the moment. That would depend upon how the meeting took place. In any case, I should avoid attracting attention to the lady or to ourselves. However, if I became certain to-night that she is still in Paris, I should act to-morrow."

"Act? What do you mean?"

"Why, I should inform the high *venta* of the unpardonable weakness of the grandmaster, and ask that he might be called upon to account for it, and that the lady might be sent out of France within the next twenty-four hours."

"He would oppose it," said the viscount, hurriedly.

"The high *venta* would force him to obey. They don't recognise any one as a master. Hernandez is only their delegate although they have given him executive power for the time being."

Fabien did not insist. He was too much disturbed, and wished to reflect upon the strange communications of the colonel. "Why does he say all this to me?" he asked himself. "Is it another test? He may, perhaps, be afraid of committing himself, and wishes to put me forward in his place."

These thoughts, and many more, absorbed him till he and his companion reached the residence of Cardinal Fesch, then at the end of the street once known by the name of Mont-Blanc. They were then near the famous gardens, and various couples, some on foot and others in carriages or cabs, were passing by on their way to the fête that was attracting all Paris that night.

"We are not to part at the door, then?" said the viscount.

"No," replied Fournès, "we will go in together. I will see later on whether it is best for you to leave me. I may have to give you a mission."

"Heaven grant," thought the viscount, "that it will be to follow Stella, and speak with her."

"I am at your orders," he said, aloud, "but I fear that our stroll will be useless. Even if Signora Negroni be still in Paris, she won't be so foolish as to appear in presence of two thousand persons."

"Appear? no, certainly not," said the colonel, in a peculiar tone. "But let us say no more about it, pray, for we are reaching the crowd. There are spies everywhere, and they catch at everything that is said. An imprudent word might cost us dear. From this moment, let us act like persons who have merely come here to amuse ourselves. I feel as though I could manage to laugh, somehow, at Gringalet's nonsense. Try to do as I do."

The viscount made up his mind to comply, and followed Fournès towards the garden railings.

The Tivoli of the Restoration had taken the place of the Tivoli of the Directory, located in a park belonging to Boutin, the treasurer of the naval department, who was decapitated in 1793. The "incredibles" of the Directory had there come to amuse themselves, deriding the terrorists; the First Consul had given a banquet to the army of Italy under its lofty trees; and Josephine Beauharnais, Madame Tallien, and Madame Récamier had all three strolled along the gravel walks. In 1821, Tivoli was only a place of amusement, a respectable one. Ladies who belonged to the highest society went there, and the Duchesse de Berry had condescended to show herself there several times before Louvel's crime made her a widow. Theatrical performances were given there, and fireworks were displayed; there were games of all kinds, and dancing as well. It was not like the Folies-Bergères, however, or like Mabille. Grisettes were ill at ease there, and the *demi-monde* had not yet dawned upon Paris so that good society had plenty of elbow-room.

There were trees a hundred years old, and lawns covered with flowers. But the lighting-up of the place was very faulty. Gas had but recently been introduced, and Venetian lanterns had not yet been imported from beyond the Alps. So there were only oil lamps, which were turned to the best account possible. Garlands of coloured glass extended along the paths and jars filled with rosin burned at the crossings. What specially characterised the Tivoli entertainments was that there was abundant room for amusement. In the days of His Most Christian Majesty Louis XVIII., Paris was not yet a bee-hive, where one cell is set above another; land was not yet doled out in small lots, at monstrous prices. Air was not dearer than bread itself; one could breathe at one's ease, and for nothing. Upon the ground where Tivoli formerly stood three or four streets were afterwards cut, and a large church, and a great many lofty houses erected. If poor Boutin, the first owner, had not had his property confiscated by the Republic, his heirs would now be almost as rich as the Rothschilds.

The speculators who had the management of the gardens in 1821, had utilized the immense space to good purpose. There was amusement there for one and all. Young men of fashion walked up and down under overhanging verdure, which served as a ceiling for a dancing-place, with illuminated arbours all around. There they met fine ladies who did not refuse to dance a quadrille, and they paid court to timid young girls who were escorted by their mothers. Many a match was made under the shade of the trees. The dancing was decorous, there was no objectionable language used, and no improper behaviour was allowed. Things went on as in a drawing-room, and there was no risk of mistaking an adventurer for an honest man, or an adventuress, for a great lady, every one was more or less acquainted, as Paris had not yet become a vast inn, where travellers of all sorts congregate.

Cits less exclusive and less hard to please, came to Tivoli to amuse themselves in many varied ways, and were liberally entertained. Nothing was wanting; there were rope-dancers, giants from the north, acrobats, tournaments, billiard-tables and games of skill and chance, all of them harmless for macaroons were the only things to be won. However, the visitors were more especially partial to the fortune-tellers and the so-called "Russian mountains."

Fortune-telling had been very popular since Mademoiselle Lenormand had predicted to Josephine Beauharnais that her first husband would perish upon the scaffold, and that her second would make her an empress.

Predictions were greatly believed in, and magicians were numerous. Tivoli had one of its own, a cunning fellow, who every night assumed a pointed cap, a robe covered with stars, and a long beard, and who for a small sum told the secrets of the future to philosophical shopkeepers and their sentimental wives. The highest ladies moreover, did not scorn to consult him, and his grotto—for he prophesied in a grotto—was besieged every night.

As for the "Russian mountains," they had been introduced into Paris in 1814 by the czar's soldiers. This Muscovite amusement consisted in descending the slope of an artificial mountain in a car, running upon rails, and the pastime was very popular, although terrible accidents had happened at times. Three years previously, on the 30th of June, 1818, at the Beaujon Gardens, a car had upset on the way down, and Baron Dufresne, of the commissariat service, and his nephew, who were seated in it, had been killed on the spot. But this misfortune had not prevented others from patronising the amusement, and women especially indulged in it.

At Tivoli the famous mountains rose up near the entrance, beside the path which Fabien de Brouage and Colonel Fouruès took on arriving, and they paused for a moment to see what was going on. Quite a crowd was waiting to get into the cars, which passed with lightning-like rapidity before the eyes of the astonished spectators. At the bottom of the slope the bold travellers alighted and then climbed again to the summit of the eminence from which they again descended, for they were seldom satisfied with one journey. The pastime was admirably adapted to lovers, and the cars with only two seats were always occupied by cavaliers and their belles. The gentleman would affectionately hold his lady-love while she uttered cries of terror and clung fast to him. Meantime papa and mamma, being afraid to risk themselves, remained at the top of the mountain. It was truly delightful.

When Fournès and Fabien came up, a young man and a young woman were just alighting from one of the cars.

"I know that young fellow," said the colonel to the viscount. "I used to see him in the baroness's rooms."

"He is one of us, isn't he?" said Fabien.

"Yes. He is a student named Marcas, a delegate of one of the Quartier Latin *ventas*. He has been of service to us, but somehow or other, I mistrust him. His face does not please me at all."

"Nor me. But the young girl with him is exquisitely beautiful."

"He is another of those who are in danger of being ruined by women."

"Who is she?"

"I don't know. She is going up the mountain again leaning upon the arm of her escort. There must be a father or mother somewhere."

"A father, colonel, and a fine-looking man, too. See! he is coming to meet his daughter."

"The deuce!" muttered Fournès, "it is that old rascal Saint-Héliér! How is it that Marcas associates with him?"

"Saint-Héliér?" repeated Fabien.

"Yes, that is what he calls himself. You would take him, with his short breeches, for a sharpshooter of Condé's army. You would be mistaken, if you did. He is no more a nobleman than I am, and although I don't exactly know what he does, I feel sure that it is something disgraceful, for he is intimate with Loquetières, the spy who arrested me in former times. I have often met them together."

"They, perhaps, have an appointment to meet here, and in that case we had better go away."

"Not till I see what that fellow Marcas is about. He seems to be the accepted suitor of the girl. If so, he is a man to be suppressed, for he would betray us to please her. The girl must help her father, and she has eyes which it would be hard for a fellow of twenty-two to resist."

The colonel was right. The chevalier, the student, and the beautiful Octavie now formed a trio which was well worth looking at. Marcas on returning home after the duel, had found a letter containing these few words: "Come to Tivoli to-night. I must speak with you."

This laconic note was not signed, but he knew the handwriting and took care not to disregard the order. Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélîer, escorted by her worthy sire, was waiting for him at the gate, and the worthy chevalier, who always followed his daughter's advice, had welcomed his young secretary cordially. The "Russian mountains" were near by, and Octavie had at once taken advantage of them, in order to speak to Marcas privately. They had now made three descents, and she had already drawn promises and apologies from him. The cars certainly ran down the rails with the speed of avalanches, but on ascending again to the summit to join the chevalier who was waiting for them, they had a chance to say a good deal to one another. The student was so much in earnest that he saw neither the colonel nor Fabien, although he passed close by them—so close indeed that Fabien heard what he and Octavie were saying.

"Do you know why the marquis came to see me?" said the girl. "To tell me that he had forbidden his nephew to marry me. You see that the marriage won't take place."

"No," replied Marcas, "for I will kill the nephew if I cannot kill the uncle. Ah! I should like to exterminate that whole family of aristocrats, and I'll do it yet!"

"You forget that the general has a daughter. Antoinette de Brouage cannot be killed with a sword-thrust—women only die from the sorrows of the heart."

The couple passed on, and Fabien did not hear the rest of the edifying conversation. As for the colonel, he had caught only a word here and there, the word love among the rest; but this was enough to confirm him in the opinion which he had just expressed as to Marcas. "Well," said he in a low tone, "was I right in mistrusting that fellow? In love with the daughter of a spy, you see! He will turn traitor in less than no time. I'll settle the matter, however. To-morrow the high *venta* shall hear of all this. We'll get rid of him."

"I won't undertake to defend him," said Fabien, deeply troubled by what he had heard. He could not doubt for a moment but what René was the subject of Marcas's remarks and threats. And he now learned for the first time that René was in love with the daughter of a man of doubtful character whom his uncle had been obliged to prevent him from marrying. Fabien had remained ignorant of what had been going on, and he now bitterly reproached himself for having so long delayed seeing his brother. "I will go to him to-morrow," thought he. "I cannot allow him to fall into a trap. I must warn him."

"Well, we have seen all that we came to see, in this part of the garden," said the colonel. "Let us go on. There are various other sights here. We may meet other people whom we know."

Fabien followed Fournès, who led him towards the groves, which were

brilliantly lighted up, thinking to himself that suspicion was the order of the day among the brethren of the Coral Pin. He had been suspected and subjected to a test that might have proved fatal. Now, the student was under suspicion, not without cause, it is true ; but the terrible colonel made no mystery of the designs which he had against the grandmaster, in case the latter had had the weakness to keep Stella in the city with him. From this to condemning her there was but a step. Carbonarism pitilessly crushed all who opposed it, and even those who were merely troublesome. For the first time since he had begun to conspire, the viscount realised the full meaning of all the oaths he had taken, and began almost to regret that he was bound to sacrifice, if needed, his love to his political duty.

He had a feeling of anxiety at the thought that some catastrophe or crisis was at hand. The half confidences of the colonel seemed strange to him. Why had he come to the Tivoli Gardens? Did he really think that he would meet Stella there? However, no matter what might be the truth, Fabien thought it idle and dangerous to question him; idle, because Fournès would not reply; dangerous, because an imprudent question might be overheard by some passer-by.

They were reaching the most crowded part of the garden at this moment, that where the games, the dancing, and the theatricals went on. The crowd had increased and it was becoming difficult to walk about. However, Fournès seemed to have an aim known to himself alone, and the viscount suffered him to lead him on. But, suddenly, at the turning of a path, in a full blaze of light, Fabien found himself face to face with his brother.

The meeting was entirely unexpected, still he looked upon it as providential, for it hastened the interview which he wished to have with René and made any preliminary talk unnecessary. Fabien rushed up to his elder brother eagerly. René had not seen him, for he was walking about with his head down and lost in thought. "I find you at last!" exclaimed Fabien in a tone calculated to prevent any painful explanation.

"Were you looking for me?" asked the count with a somewhat sad smile. These words seemed like a reproach, but his face cleared up and Fabien saw at once that the ice was broken.

He now remembered that his superior in the Coral Pin Association was with him. "Colonel," said he, "let me introduce you to my brother. René, this is Colonel Fournès."

The count bowed somewhat coldly, and the colonel seemed annoyed. However, he was polite, for he made haste to say: "I was formerly the comrade and friend of General de Brouage, and although we are no longer serving under the same flag, he did not hesitate to defend me when I was accused of wishing to overthrow the government. I shall never forget the service which he did me then, for it is to him I owe my freedom and my renunciation of political views."

The aim of this declaration was evidently to make René believe that Colonel Fournès was only intimate with Fabien through gratitude for what the marquis had done for him. "My dear friend," added the colonel, "I will leave you with your brother. You have, perhaps, not seen him of late, and no doubt you have a deal to say to him. Just let me say two words to you and I will leave you." Then, drawing Fabien aside, he added: "We must separate. Your brother might think it strange if I were near while you are talking. Don't stay with him very long, for I have reason to believe that there will be a woman here to-night, a woman with a mask over her face. Should you see such a person, follow her, try to

speak with her, and, in a word, ascertain if possible whether she is the Signora Negroni or not. I charge you with this mission as I cannot and do not wish to undertake it myself. I beg of you to come to the Café de la Régence to-morrow at four to tell me what you have accomplished." Thereupon, without leaving his young friend time to reply, the colonel went off, after making a polite bow to René.

Fabien was amazed. Stella in Paris and coming to the ball at Tivoli in disguise, this was more good fortune than he had dared to hope for. The story of the "woman with the death's-head" returned to his mind and he at once espied many new possibilities. He indeed became so lost in thought after the colonel's remarks that his brother was obliged to take his arm and say, "All is forgotten now that we are again together. But why have I not seen anything of you for so long?"

"It is inexcusable, I am well aware of that. But I was sure that you would forgive me. I could not act differently, for my life would not harmonise with that which you lead. I did not belong to myself."

"To whom did you belong then?" asked René. "To a woman no doubt."

"If that were true would you reproach me with it?"

"Heaven forbid! For I also have been in love."

"And you are still in love, I know that."

"Who told you?" eagerly asked the young count.

"No matter," replied Fabien, who hesitated about telling his brother what he had seen near the "Russian mountains." "However I know that you have had a great deal to suffer in connection with poor Henri's death."

"Yes," said René, "I have indeed suffered. Your presence would have been of great service to me. If you had come I would have told you my troubles and you could have told me your own. We should have been strong to bear up against our sorrow had we been united."

"You have been unhappy then, brother?" said Fabien, who was greatly moved.

"I had a terrible scene with my uncle this morning. He almost drove me away."

"Because you insist upon marrying Mademoiselle de Saint-Héliér in spite of him."

"Who told you this?"

"I heard it ten minutes ago. She is here."

"Octavie! Have you seen her? Do you know her?"

"I saw her ten minutes ago. She is extremely beautiful."

When you wish to obtain a lover's confidence you should always praise the beauty of the object of his affection.

"Ah! you understand me, I see!" exclaimed René. "It has sufficed for you to see her to admit that she is adorable. What would you say if you heard her voice and if her eyes looked into yours? My uncle does not know her—"

"You are mistaken. He went to see her to-day. To tell her that he forbade your marrying her."

"What! did he dare?"

"You ought not to be surprised at that, as you know him so well and see him so often. He tyrannizes over all who depend upon him in any way."

"I do not wish to depend upon him any longer. Listen, Fabien, you are my brother and my only friend. I will tell you all. I am desperately

in love with Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier and she loves me. We have exchanged promises which we shall keep. I half suspected that my uncle would take this outrageous step. However, I went to her house just now and was told that her father had brought her here. So I came because I was determined to arrive at an understanding this very night. You must tell me in what part of the garden I shall find her. I will go to her and we will talk with Monsieur de Saint-Hélier. He idolizes his daughter and won't drive her to despair by refusing to consent to our marriage. Don't remind me that it will cause a complete rupture with my uncle. I am aware of that, but I have resolved to marry Octavie."

With a single word Fabien could have reduced all his brother's plans and hopes to naught, but he hesitated about doing so. He felt that if he told him what Octavie had said to Marcas on leaving the "Russian mountain" it would crush him to the earth.

"What do I care for my uncle's rage?" resumed René. "I shall no longer have his support and I shall be poor; but Octavie will be my wife and you will be my friend."

"Poor, did you say? Hasn't Saint-Hélier's daughter any fortune?"

"I don't know. I do not like to ask. What I intend to do is to live on the little remaining to me and share it with her. And, since we are on the subject, excuse me if I speak further. We have never talked of money matters, and I hate to do so, but I am forced to allude to them. I cannot keep my share of our estate at Brouage. If you were rich I should beg of you to buy it, so that it might remain in the family, but, unfortunately, you are not in a position to pay for it. I must resign myself to selling it to strangers."

"It will be very difficult to do so," stammered Fabien who was greatly embarrassed by this proposition.

"I agree with you," replied René; "the château is dilapidated, the land is mortgaged, but I have made up my mind to ask a low price for it all. Some wealthy man at Rochefort, Saintes or La Rochelle may like to possess an ancient feudal castle. Besides, so as to hasten the sale, I shall go to Brouage myself."

"To Brouage!" exclaimed Fabien, in agony. "You can't mean it!"

"I do mean it, and when I have the Chevalier de Saint-Hélier's consent I shall start, and that will be soon."

René had no idea of the effect which this declaration produced upon his brother. If he went to the farm, all would be lost as regarded the Carbonari. What would René say at sight of the baroness, whom he was not likely to take for a peasant woman? And what would become of the treasure, hidden in the vaults of the château, which he talked of selling to the first bidder? Fabien would be thought a traitor. He could not resign himself to such shame or allow the secrets of the Association to be betrayed. He at once formed a determination. "I will tell René what I know about that creature, and about Saint-Hélier," he thought. "He himself forces me to do so. He will suffer, but a man suffers when a surgeon cuts off his arm when gangrene sets in, and yet he blesses him after the amputation." Then looking René full in the face, he said aloud: "Listen to me, brother, and summon courage to hear what I have to say. You must not go away; you must not, and cannot, marry a woman who is basely deceiving you."

The count turned pale and was about to protest, when he suddenly heard a voice, which always had a thrilling effect upon him. He and

Fabien were walking slowly along a wide path, and couples going in the same direction as themselves, passed them frequently. The voice was that of Octavie, who was hastening along, leaning on Marcas's arm, and saying to her father, who was quite out of breath at walking so fast: "Didn't you hear what those people were saying? The 'woman with the death's-head' is going to the magician's grotto. We haven't a moment to lose if we wish to see her."

The chevalier, his daughter, and the student passed by without noticing the two brothers. But René saw the trio, and, suddenly dropping Fabien's arm, he darted after them. There was a turn in the path hard by. They had disappeared behind the hedges, and René disappeared likewise; whilst Stella's lover, disturbed by Octavie's words, did not attempt to follow him.

"They were talking about her," he thought. "The masked woman whom the colonel spoke of is the 'woman with the death's-head' whom those stupid cits were reading about at the Café de Foy—and the colonel believes her to be Stella Negroni."

His agitation was such that he had to lean against a tree near by and wait till he could recover himself. He had forgotten the danger which would threaten the Coral Pin Association should René persist in his plan of going to Brouage. He only thought of Stella, and said to himself: "If it be she, what can she be doing here? Can she wish to consult the fortune-teller? It's absurd! and yet she is a Neapolitan and has many of the superstitious notions of her country. I have often heard her speak of the jettatura. On the night when she told me about that spy, she said that he was a jettatore, that he had the evil eye, and would bring misfortune upon all he gazed at! She also mentioned that a peasant woman in the Abruzzi had foretold that Negroni, her husband, would die a violent death. As for the mask—Hernandez himself has no doubt forced her to wear it. Ah! if she loved me she would not have left me ignorant of the fact that she was still in Paris."

The viscount now began to recover his senses, and asked himself what he had best do, to rid himself of the uncertainty which was torturing him. The simplest plan was to repair at once to the spot which the mysterious stranger was now about to visit. Fabien was not in the habit of coming to the Tivoli Gardens frequently, and he knew little about the magician's cave. However, he turned into the path leading to it, reflecting as he went as to what he should do to clear up his doubts. It was easy for him to place himself in such a way as to see the masked woman pass by, but very difficult to approach her and speak to her without ceremony. Besides, he feared that he might meet Octavie and her party, whom René must have joined.

His brother's presence would have prevented him from doing what he wished, which, as it was, was by no means an easy matter. Nor did he care to meet Colonel Fournès, who, although valuable as an ally in a conspiracy, was decidedly in the way of a love affair. He walked along cautiously, but not slowly, and looked to the right and left, and even behind him in order to make sure that he was not being followed; however, he did not see any of the persons whom he wished to avoid.

He saw with satisfaction that the appearance of the masked phenomenon, to whom Octavie de Saint-Hélier had alluded, was not drawing any such crowd as she had foretold. Indeed the throng seemed to be directing its steps towards that part of the garden where the acting was going on. Octavie might be mistaken; and the woman with the death's-head might have

given up her idea of going to the magician's cave, and have mingled with the spectators of the pantomime.

Fabien thought at first that this was the case, but he soon saw some fuses fly upward hailed by shouts of delight, and realised that the public, attracted by the title given to the pantomime, was forgetting everything else in order to see Gringalet flying to the moon, as the placards had declared he would do. The viscount accordingly went in an opposite direction. The managers of the Tivoli Gardens had located the sorcerer in the darkest corner of the park, and had taken great pains to enhance his prestige. The artificial grotto was constructed of real rocks, covered with real moss, and ivy. It was deep and divided into sections like a labyrinth. The portion occupied by the magician was far back, and somewhat scantily furnished with a rush-seated chair for those who came to consult him, and an arm-chair for himself. He remained in semi-obscurity while the light of a lamp hanging from the vaulted ceiling fell full upon his visitors. He could examine their faces at his ease, study their behaviour and expression of countenance, and "predict" accordingly, while they saw nothing but his beard, his eyes, and his wand.

The sombre cavern had an exit at the back, a door of which the fortune-teller kept the key, and which he alone used. He went in and out without coming in contact with the public, who, in order to reach him, were obliged to follow along, narrow path edged with mournful-looking cypress-trees, like a path in a cemetery. Those who had questioned the oracle were obliged to retire by the road they had come by. In front of the grotto there was a gate at which a false blackamoor in an odd costume stood with orders not to let more than one or two persons enter at the same time, and to apprise the enchanter of their coming by pulling a wire which corresponded with a bell inside the cave.

Thanks to this precaution, the emulator of Nostradamus did not fear to be caught smoking a pipe between two predictions. He had a weakness for tobacco which would not have looked well in a magician by any means.

Fabien was not aware of all this, but he had soon examined the exterior of the grotto. The rocky mass and the path leading up to it were not as distinctly visible as the other attractions of the garden. But there were several lamps near by, including one at the back door by which the magician entered.

Fabien began by following from without the avenue of cypresses going from the gate to the grotto; the trees were so near to one another that they formed a kind of impassable hedge. It was hard indeed to find a place large enough even for a person to pass his hand through and see the visitors from afar. Fabien found such an opening, however, and looked towards the gate. There was a deal of noise and stir at the other end of the park, where the fireworks were doing wonders. But a sound which came nearer to the viscount's ears told him that the masked woman might be approaching. Indeed, he soon saw a white form standing in front of a black one; in other words, a woman talking with the spurious negro. At the same time, from the side of the cave, he heard a bell ring as a signal. The woman then went forward slowly along the pathway.

She was alone, and wore an ample cloak, and a white veil upon her head, which gave her a phantom-like appearance. Fabien could not tell, at the distance at which he stood from her, whether she had a mask on or not. But he waited with his heart beating with mingled hope and pain,

and asked himself what he should do next. Would it be best to let this strange unknown woman pass on, and try to ascertain who she was from her gait and figure? Or would it be better to call her suddenly by name and see whether she would stop? The experiment would be a decisive one. Called by name when she least expected it, Stella, if it were she, would certainly not have the self-possession to pretend that she did not hear, and would not fail to betray herself by some sound or gesture. But the result would be embarrassing, almost ridiculous. How could he talk to her through a hedge of cypresses, especially near a pathway which people were looking on, the magician in his cave, and the loungers near the gate? Stella might faint with fright; and, on the other hand, how could he approach her after she had visited the cave, when she would be among the crowd outside? The Saint-Héliers and René were probably there, and their presence was still another obstacle in his way.

All these thoughts passed quickly through Fabien's mind, and he almost despaired of being able to turn the chance to account, when suddenly an odd fancy struck him. The path was long, the woman in white was walking along slowly and, indeed, she seemed to hesitate. A few moments must not elapse before she could reach the entrance of the fortune-teller's cave.

Accordingly the viscount suddenly left his post of observation and ran quickly towards the artificial rocks which sheltered the sorcerer. He went round them and knocked at the back door. He knocked, from habit, in a certain way—three knocks, with an interval between. His habits as a conspirator were like those of a freemason. The summons had its effect. The door was immediately opened, and the magician appeared saying, in a low tone: "Come in at once."

Fabien had prepared various explanations to account for his presence, but he saw that it would be best to enter before saying a word, and he did so. The magician then closed the door, and bolted it inside.

"There is only just time," muttered he, beginning to take off his fantastic garments. "The masked woman is at the end of the path, and had you delayed three minutes longer, you would have been too late. Fortunately she isn't hurrying. You can dress before she comes. But make haste!"

Fabien did not know what to think. He had come on purpose to ask the magician to lend him his robes and let him take his place for a few moments; but he had feared that the purveyor of predictions would need a deal of persuasion to entertain this proposition; while now, on the contrary, he found him ready to do so without being asked. The viscount thought that it would be best to pay him at once in order to secure him completely. "You have guessed my wishes," he said. "You are doing me a great service, and I will reward you well." He put his hand into his pocket as he spoke.

"We agreed upon the price, you remember," said the fortune-teller. "I will not go back on what I said, although it is not enough, as I am risking the loss of my place. If the managers of the garden knew that I had let another man take my place for pay, they would tell me to go and tell fortunes somewhere else. But I gave you my word, so give me my hundred francs, and put on my robe."

Fabien did not attempt to make out the meaning of all this, or to bargain either, but took the money from his purse and slipped it into the hand of the magician, who took it with undisguised satisfaction, and helped him on with a kind of scarlet dressing-gown, a high pointed cap studded with stars, and a long, black beard, which half concealed his face.

The viscount submitted without a word. He was somewhat ashamed of

masquerading in this manner, but he saw no other way to succeed in his purpose.

"Now," said the Matthew Lansberg of the Tivoli Gardens, "you are in my skin, as it were, and if you take care not to go too near the lamp the lady will take you for me. The rest is your own look out. If you wish to tell her fortune, everything is at hand: the *tarot* cards for the 'great prophecy' are on the table. I'm off! I am going to take a drink at the wine shop in the Rue Saint-Lazare and will be back in half an hour. I can't allow you any more time than that, and it ought to be enough. One can say a great deal to one's sweetheart in less time than that. I have told my negro all about it. He won't let any visitors in at the gate till he hears me whistle. I'll knock three times when I come back, so that you may know that it's I. Bolt the door when I go out, and don't open it till I knock. One never knows what may happen. There are some very suspicious husbands in the world, that's certain! Good-bye, sir, and good luck to you!" Thereupon the magician slipped out of his grotto and closed the door after him.

The cunning rascal was certainly not doing this for the first time. In fact, he willingly agreed to such tricks for a consideration. Fabien immediately bolted the door to keep out all intruders, and settled himself in the magician's chair. From this seat he could see as far as the end of the path, and he now perceived that the woman for whom he was waiting with inexpressible anxiety was not more than twenty paces from the entrance of the cave. At this moment a thought suddenly occurred to him. "Who is it," he asked himself, "who made the arrangements with the magician by which I am accidentally profiting? If this woman really be Stella Negroni, there is but one man who can have done so, and that must be Hernandez. And if it be Hernandez," added Fabien to himself, "he will come here and find me playing the magician's part. But no; Hernandez doesn't need to resort to tricks like these in order to see Stella. He needn't make appointments with her in the magician's cave at Tivoli Gardens. But who can it be? It must be some saucy fellow who read the story of the woman with the death's-head in the papers, and thought of this means of making advances to her as a possible husband, so as to get at her money."

Reassured by this course of reasoning, the viscount prepared for the interview which was about to put an end to his painful anxiety.

The woman slowly approached down the cypress walk. She did not perceive Fabien seated in the dark cavern, but Fabien distinctly saw her, although the avenue was so badly lighted up. She wore a white dress, over which was thrown a kind of silken cloak, with a wide collar, and a hood hiding her figure and covering her head. In this guise it was impossible to recognise Stella Negroni. The woman seemed ghostly from afar, and near you would have taken her for a nun.

Fabien's heart beat faster and faster as he saw that she wore a mask. So she was really the mysterious woman whom the colonel had spoken of, the woman about whom all Paris was talking, and whom the papers described in such an improbable fashion. It remained to be seen, however, whether she was Stella or not. The nearer she came the more the viscount doubted this, and he began to ask himself what he should do if he found himself alone with a woman who was an utter stranger to him, and had merely come to consult him as a fortune-teller. He did not feel in the humour to play a part, and reply by fanciful predictions to the questions of some adventuress on the lookout for a husband. But

he could not well get rid of the troublesome interview to which he might be subjected. So he made up his mind to cut it short by saying as little as possible, and refusing to consult the cards, although by that course he ran the risk of compromising the reputation of the Tivoli Garden's magician for ever.

The woman in white had now reached the entrance of the grotto, and evidently hesitated about entering. The appearance of the cave was not inviting. The light of the lamp suspended from the rocks shone merely upon the chair placed as a seat for visitors; a few of the stars upon the robe and cap of the magician glittering in the feeble rays. The sorcerer's get-up, which was intended to attract the nervous women who visited the cave, really frightened them, so that they seldom came alone. But the stranger was no doubt brave; for, after having paused for a few seconds upon the threshold, she advanced with a firm step until she reached the lamp. She stopped there, and her eyes, which shone through the holes of her mask, looked around for the magician.

Fabien was gazing at her with anxious fixity. She was as tall as Stella, and greatly reminded him of her in her gait and bearing; but the mask entirely hid her face, and the hood concealed her hair. He waited for her to speak; but she also waited, and seemed surprised at his prolonged silence. Finally she made up her mind to put a stop to it, and said: "I have come," in a low tone.

"Stella!" exclaimed Fabien, who at once recognized the voice so dear to him. And thereupon forgetting the advice of the magician, he rose, stepped forward, and stood in the light.

At the same time, yielding to an impulse stronger than his own will, he threw aside his robe, pulled off his false beard, and without these ridiculous adjuncts, stood revealed as the Italian woman had been in the habit of seeing him, young, ardent, and handsome. It was a startling moment for her. "He! it is he!" she murmured.

She turned to fly, but tottered, and Fabien caught her in his arms. She struggled to free herself, but her strength failed her. Her hands fell powerless at her side, and her eyes closed. She lost consciousness, and was sinking down just as the viscount managed to seat her in the magician's chair.

He would have knelt at her feet, but she was quite insensible, and the situation was a critical one. He wished to revive her at once, and as it was necessary, above all, to facilitate her breathing, he tried to remove her mask; the latter was not a mere carnival affair, but a complete covering of black velvet, such as hid the whole face from the roots of the hair to the chin, merely having holes which enabled the young woman to breathe and see, and being firmly tied on by ribbons meeting behind the head. M. de Brouage could not cut these ribbons, for he had neither scissors nor knife at hand, and he did not like to break them for fear of hurting Stella. So he attempted to raise the mask at its lower portion, and would perhaps have succeeded had not the efforts which he made to do so aroused the Italian woman from her swoon. She sat up, and attempted to rise, and, although she did not succeed, she was able to push Fabien back and say: "Leave me! Your conduct is unpardonable."

"What have I done?"

"You wrote to me in another person's name so as to make me come to this place."

"I! How could I write to you? How did I know that you were in

Paris? I was told that you had left France, and I thought that you were lost to me forever."

The young woman had now revived completely, and her first impulse was to raise her hands to her face to make sure that she was still masked. "Then it was not you," said she, in a husky tone, "who sent me a letter yesterday with the words: 'Come to-morrow night to the Tivoli Gardens at a little before ten, and go alone to the magician's cave. You will find some one there whom you have not seen for two months, and—'" Stella hesitated for a moment, and then added: "'And who loves you.'"

"You believe then that I do love you, as you imagine that the letter came from me!" exclaimed Fabien.

"If I had thought that it was written by you I should not be here," replied Stella at once. "I only thought it when I saw you here."

"But you hoped to meet the person who wrote to you, and that person does not offend you when he speaks to you of his love."

"No, for I have given him the right to do so."

"Yes, I know that you are his; but you could not have thought that the letter came from him. He would have signed it if it had been from him, and he would not tell you that he had not seen you for two months, as you have not been parted from him since your disappearance."

"How do you know that?"

"What! has he ceased to see you?"

"I have lived alone since the fatal night when a detective found his way into the house where I lived with Francesca," replied the young woman, sadly. "I do not complain of it, and I accuse no one. We, all of us, were betrayed. The spy came to the house and gave orders to have us searched for. To save the Coral Pin Association it was necessary for us to disappear. I had my choice between exile and the course which I have pursued. I should perhaps have done better to exile myself."

"Yes, as the man for whom you sacrificed yourself has left you. It was he, no doubt, who suggested your wearing a mask, and spreading a report in Paris which no one with any common sense would believe—he has unscrupulously trifled with your liberty, your very life perhaps, for the day will come when the falsehood will be detected, and you will be recognised; our enemies won't spare you, you will be put in prison—and—"

"No one will ever recognise me," said Stella in a stifled voice.

"Don't flatter yourself with that belief. The police will not be satisfied with the assurances of a physician who may any day become an object of suspicion, as it may be discovered that he is one of us. If any doctor but Verdon had been sent to look at you, you would have been found out, and you would have been lost; and yet you believe that the man who suffered you to run this risk really loves you?"

"I tell you that I have nothing to fear. The Stella Negroni whom you once knew no longer exists. I can show my face with impunity to all who may suspect me of being Stella. They would merely see a hideous creature, and would be obliged to confess that I am indeed a woman with a death's-head."

"What do you mean?"

"I was tired of being beautiful and have ceased to be so. A burning water, a corrosive lotion exists which I made use of to destroy the fatal beauty which was once mine."

"No, no! it is impossible! You have not committed such a crime, for it is a crime to destroy Heaven's work; you are deceiving me, because you

hate me, and are trying to rid yourself of my love, which you do not care for."

"I swear to you, by my eternal salvation, that I am telling you the truth."

"Ah!" exclaimed Fabien, "I believe you if you speak like that, but I am horrified at your lover's conduct. It was he who advised you to disfigure yourself, perhaps forced you to do so."

"No; on the contrary, he tried to dissuade me from it. It was I who resolved to die to the outside world."

"And he accepted this horrible sacrifice! His hand did not stop you? Ah! in that I recognise the ambitious fanatic, the egotistical sectarian who would crush all humanity to attain his one aim! And what an aim! If he even thought of freeing nations it would not be so bad. But no, he wishes to rouse all France and Europe merely in order to establish a constitutional government in Naples! A noble design, it must be said," added the viscount bitterly, "and well worth sacrificing a woman to its success!"

"You serve the same cause," said the Italian woman in a low tone.

"The same cause? No! I fight for liberty, but my heart and life are yours. I have suffered on your account, and am ready to suffer more. He has used you as a tool. He has made you the victim of his pride. He had no more leisure for love, but he resolved that no one else should court you. He is like those Eastern despots, who when they die exact that their slaves shall perish on their funeral pile."

"No, no, this is false; you slander him!"

"I slander him? You forget that he has ceased to visit you since the day when you were mad enough to destroy your beauty for his sake. You just said that he had ceased to see you."

"Because he could not do so without risk of ruining us both."

"And you still believe in his love, a love that makes calculations?"

"He has a duty towards his brethren."

"A duty! You talk of duty! I have also a duty, and have never failed in it, but I would never be so base as to abandon a woman, whom I loved, and who sacrificed herself for me."

"If I believed that he had abandoned me," said Stella, "I would revenge myself."

"Revenge yourself then, for I swear to you that this man is no longer thinking of you."

"If he did not think of me he would not have summoned me here to-night."

"Summoned you here? But with what precautions! Good heavens! He did not even dare to sign the letter, and for fear of compromising himself he makes an appointment in a public garden and compels you to show yourself to a gaping crowd and to expose yourself to danger. And then when you have braved everything to meet him he fails to appear."

"He will come. I am before the time he mentioned."

"No, no, he will not come. He has thought better of it, no doubt, and is afraid of the risk. To-morrow, to-night, perhaps, you will receive another letter, in which he will tell you in writing what he had to say. He will tell you to go away, to leave Paris, where he does not care to have you stay. He has given out that you had gone to America."

Stella started and hung her head. Fabien saw that she was beginning to doubt Hernandez, "He cannot have ever loved you," he added,

"It is because he once loved me that he dreads seeing me with this horrible mask."

"With that mask ! I tried, just now, to take it off. Ah ! I wish I had succeeded ! When you recovered your consciousness you would have found me on my knees before you, for I love you for yourself, not for your beauty — you doubt it ? Put me to the proof !"

Touched and troubled by this declaration, Stella Negroni was silent and Fabien was about to say a great deal more when three knocks were heard at the back door of the grotto. They were not loud, still they were most distinct.

"What is that ?" demanded the young woman, rising at once. "Who is knocking ?"

"It is the magician, no doubt," replied Fabien, trying to appear calm. "When he let me in he told me that he could not remain away more than half an hour."

"You had an understanding with him, then ?"

"No, I read in the papers the story of the woman with the death's-head. It was said that she would visit these gardens. You were always present in my thoughts. I felt that I should meet you here. I came and I saw a masked woman approaching the cave. It was then that I thought of taking the magician's place."

"Then you used no deceit and did not know that another —"

"I swear that I am telling you the truth," interrupted Fabien.

"I believe it and forgive you," said Stella, in a voice full of emotion.

"And now, farewell, I entreat you to forget me !"

"Forget you ? Do you then forbid me to see you again ?"

"To see me again would ruin us all, and —"

The knocks at the door were now renewed, and became much louder.

"Farewell !" said the Italian. "The magician must not find me here."

"I will speak with him," said Fabien. "I will bribe him, I will tell him to go away."

But the knocks were reiterated, and so violently, that they shook the door. The viscount felt astonished that the magician should dare to knock in this way, and it occurred to him that the new comer might be some one with evil designs. Stella thought the same, for she raised her finger to her lips to silence Fabien and went towards the entrance of the grotto. He again attempted to stop her, but she held out her hand which he covered with kisses. He saw more than a reward in this spontaneous gesture, he thought it a promise, and understanding the danger of prolonging so critical a situation, he let her depart. She went hastily away, following the narrow path which led to the gate guarded by the spurious blackamoor.

The knocks had become very noisy by now. Fabien had made up his mind to open the door, but he wished first to give Stella time to disappear, so he contented himself with approaching the back entrance so as to face the enemy if he burst in. He at last saw Stella's white garments vanish in the distance, whereupon he unbolted the door and instead of waiting for the visitor to push it open, opened it himself, rushed out and shut it again quickly. This premeditated manœuvre was intended to prevent any intruder from entering the grotto, and pursuing Stella by the shortest road. The precaution was a wise one, for as Fabien rushed out a man seized him by the collar. The viscount pushed him back, and a struggle would have taken place, had not the light of a lamp attached to the artificial rocks revealed his assailant to be the grandmaster of the Coral Pin Associa-

tion. Fabien had somewhat expected this encounter, and only feigned great surprise for form's sake.

The amazement of the Prince of Catanzaro was much greater when he found himself face to face with Fabien. He was on the point of giving way to his rage, for he had had abundant time to work himself into a passion while knocking at the door. He had heard a woman's voice which he had thought he knew, and a man's voice which he had taken for that of the magician. So the appearance of Fabien de Brouage was calculated to irritate him, and, indeed, he only partly restrained his anger. "I did not expect to find you here, sir," he said, in a haughty tone.

"Nor did I expect to see you," replied Fabien.

"Why are you here?" said Orso, drily.

"Is it the grandmaster addressing a member, or the Prince of Catanzaro asking Viscount de Brouage a question?"

"It is in my capacity as grandmaster, that I question you."

"In that case, I feel it to be my duty to reply. I begin by saying that you advised me to lead a gay and idle life while waiting for action. So I came to the Tivoli Gardens just as I go to Ranelagh, the theatre, and the card-table."

"Don't equivocate, pray. I ask why you came to this grotto, and why you were so long in opening the door to me?"

"I could not guess that you were outside."

"Will you swear that you would have opened it any sooner if you had known it?"

Fabien was silent, for falsehood was repugnant to him.

"I see that I was right in believing that you had something to hide and that you especially feared seeing me. You were not alone?"

"No," replied the viscount, firmly. "There was a woman with me, but I do not admit that anyone has the right to ask me who she was."

"I do not ask her name. I know it."

Fabien started at this calm reply, but he did not lose countenance, and replied, unhesitatingly: "What do you want more, then?"

"I wish to know if this meeting had been pre-arranged."

"It had not. It was the result of chance."

"It wasn't chance that made you take the place of the imposter who makes his predictions here."

M. de Brouage was making great efforts to restrain himself, for he had entirely forgotten the hierarchy of the Carbonari, and in the leader of the Coral Pin Brotherhood he now only saw a rival, an obstacle to his happiness. He remembered, however, that Stella was dependent upon the prince, so he began to justify her. "I have no reason for concealing the truth from you," said he. "This is what took place: Just now while crossing the gardens I heard that the masked woman, about whom all Paris is talking, was coming to the fortune-teller's cave. I took it into my head to find out who she was, and thought that this man would consent, for a bribe, to let me take his place. I was not mistaken; he made no difficulty in doing so, and I even thought that he seemed to expect some such proposal. It is possible, as I afterwards thought, that he took me for some one else."

This last remark, which showed his frankness, made a favourable impression upon the Prince of Catanzaro. "True," said he, in a dry tone. "He took you for some one whom he was expecting, and you turned the mistake to account."

"I admit that."

"You put on the magician's robes, and a woman came here, a woman you recognized—"

"As soon as she spoke."

"And you made yourself known to her?"

"Immediately. I did not wish to play an absurd part. I threw off the paltry disguise, and appeared before her."

All these replies were made in a firm and unembarrassed tone. Fabien had recovered his composure. He was following a direct course, and had made up his mind to continue in it. The prince was much more agitated than he, but had resolved to put an end to the ambiguity of the situation. "Well, sir," said he, "I am obliged to you for hiding nothing from me, and I won't insult you by doubting your sincerity; moreover, I feel sure that you will reply frankly to the question which I am about to ask. Did you see Signora Negroni's face?"

"No," replied the viscount, unhesitatingly, "but I know why she is obliged to wear a mask."

Orso felt the reproach conveyed by these words, but did not see fit to notice it. "Well, then," said he, without showing any annoyance, "I must now give you a few explanations, which you do not ask for, I know, but which I beg you to listen to. When Signora Negroni and Madame de Casanova were forced to leave the house where they lived in order to escape from the police, I wished to make them leave France. Though I changed my mind, it was only because, on the one hand, Madame de Casanova was likely to prove very useful to us at Brouage, and on the other, Signora Negroni absolutely refused to leave. When I insisted, she carried her devotion so far as to disfigure herself so that she might not be recognized, and thus safely remain in Paris."

"It was true, then!" exclaimed Fabien, in a tone of deep grief.

"After that," resumed the prince, without noticing this exclamation, "I had not the courage to insist upon exile, which she feared more than death. I allowed her to remain in Paris, and took such precautions that she runs no risk. The police think that they know all about her, and the crowd which at first gathered about her wherever she went, has lately almost entirely ceased to think of her. But in order that Signora Negroni may be able to continue to live the kind of life which I have arranged for her, it is necessary that all who formerly knew her, should abstain from visiting her. I have been obliged to cease seeing her, myself, and although I yielded to the desire to have an interview with her this evening in this magician's cave, I reproach myself with my own weakness, for it has had painful results, and might have had a disastrous one. You understand from what I say, sir, that Signora Negroni came here to-night to meet me. You knew it already, but I wish to prove to you that I am as frank as you yourself are. And now, I expect a promise from you."

"What is it?"

"I ask you to promise me that you will no longer try to see Signora Negroni."

"Why should I try to see her?"

"Because you love her," replied Orso, looking keenly at the viscount.

"I!—who told you so?"

"Who? She told me so herself. You love her, or rather you thought that you did, for it was her beauty that you loved, and that is gone."

Fabien was about to protest, but he restrained himself, and partly succeeded in concealing his feelings.

"This promise," resumed Orso, "is one that I might demand. I might remind you that you have sworn to obey me in everything that concerns the interest of our cause, and that you would seriously compromise those interests by persisting in troubling yourself about a woman, who, as far as you are concerned, must no longer exist. I prefer to appeal to your reason, and, above all, to your sense of honour. You know that I am bound to Signora Negroni by ties of affection. I do not reproach you for having forgotten this, but I hope that in future you will remember it, and I now wish for a clear answer from you."

Fabien, thus courteously treated, felt very much perplexed, for he shrank from taking an oath which he did not intend to keep; and he fully understood that a refusal to reply, would be equivalent to a declaration of war. Now the game was not an even one between him and the Prince of Catanzaro; not that he feared his authority, but he dreaded lest the jealous lover might force Stella to leave France, and really send her, this time, across the ocean. Fabien had found the divine Stella again, and relied upon being able to keep her in sight, for it was not difficult to find out where the woman with the death's-head lived. To get out of the difficulty he tried to find some pretext to avoid replying, but could not think of any. Chance served him, however, by sending the magician back to the grotto. The prophet suddenly appeared, after visiting all the taverns in the neighbourhood, and came towards the cave. "If this man sees us," said the viscount, in a low tone, "he will ask for explanations which it would be idle to give. Let us go away before he comes here."

The prince felt the justice of the advice, and walked off, leading Fabien to a path where he relied upon resuming the conversation, but the pantomime was now at an end, and the crowd which had witnessed the performance, had again begun to scatter about the park. At the first step taken by the two rivals when they had passed the cypress hedge, they found themselves face to face with the Chevalier de Saint-Hélier and his party. "The deuce take it!" said Fabien, "here is my brother and some persons whom I am obliged to speak to. It is better not to let them see you."

The prince stopped short, but before he disappeared behind the trees, he said, hurriedly, to M. de Brouage: "Remember, that to love her, means to rush on to death!"

X.

THE Chevalier de Saint-Hélier, although he called himself a nobleman, was as regular in his habits as any humdrum person of the middle classes. His mornings were spent in bed, for he rose late, perhaps because he did not retire early. At twelve, precisely, he breakfasted, and always with the incomparable Octavie, his only child and heiress. It was the only time during the day, when the father and daughter could exchange confidences, for they never saw each other alone, except at that hour. After breakfast, the chevalier went into his study, where he found his secretary, young Marcas. After preparing his work for him, an easy task, which consisted, for the most part, in writing notes of invitation, he dressed, and invariably left the house at four o'clock. Where did he go? His very servants did not know, for he did not keep a carriage; however, on leaving his house, he always walked towards the boulevard. The shopkeepers in the neighbourhood saw him pass by, neatly dressed, with his hair well-arranged,

and carrying a large umbrella under his arm. They supposed that he went out to pay some visits or to take the air, and did not trouble themselves about him.

At seven, the chevalier returned home, and found dinner waiting for him; a dinner prepared by an excellent cook, for he was fastidious about his eating. At the evening meal, there were usually two or three guests, old friends of the emigration days, and among others, Loquetières, who was on a footing of extreme intimacy with the chevalier.

They left table at nine and went to the drawing-room, unless the chevalier and his daughter were invited out, which seldom happened, or the weather admitted of a promenade in the public gardens. Almost every evening there was a meeting of artists, actors, and writers at the Place Royale, for Saint-Hélier prided himself upon receiving intellectual people. There was music, recitations, and the reading of plays and novels, even dancing occasionally, and all this sometimes went on till two or three in the morning. When the last guest left, the host bade his daughter good-night, and repaired to his private apartment, whence he did not emerge till a quarter to twelve the next day.

The result of such arrangements as these was that Mademoiselle Octavie had almost absolute liberty. Her father never asked her how she employed her time, and it must be said that he placed entire reliance in her good sense, and that his confidence was well founded.

Deprived since childhood of a mother's attention and advice, Octavie had early learned to take care of herself, and she showed both prudence and discernment. She carried her discretion so far as never to question the author of her days as to the true state of his fortune and his outdoor occupation. She had never disturbed herself about his doings between three and eleven in the morning, although she had reason to believe that he did not pass all his nights and mornings in bed. They understood one another perfectly, and were under no necessity of communicating their impressions or plans, as they both pursued the same aim by different means.

It was for this reason that the chevalier had not disturbed himself when his dear daughter had at first encouraged the attentions of Count René de Brouage, and had then turned her overpowering eyes upon his uncle. It was for this reason, also, that he had said nothing when she was not over severe with Marcas.

The worthy man knew that Octavie's virtue ran no risk, and he had a high opinion of her chances of making a good match; still he relied in a measure upon himself to bring about this consummation. The great point in his estimation was that she should have a good dowry, and he had been trying for six years to accumulate a large sum without having, as yet, succeeded. Still he thought that nothing was impossible with her dazzling beauty, her lively and practical mind, and uncommon strength of will. In his long career he had more than once seen women very inferior to Octavie marry great noblemen worth several millions of money. He therefore relied upon her, without ceasing to work on his own side, and he let her play her own game on her own chess-board.

However, for a few days past, he had failed to understand what his daughter was thinking of. She had plainly said that Marcas was a man whom he ought to turn out of the house, and that she wished to hear no more of Count René de Brouage. She had not hesitated to state that she aspired to becoming a marchioness, the wife of a peer, by making the ex-colonel of the 9th Dragoons fall in love with her. Now, however, she no

longer talked of the general, she ran about the "Russian mountains" with Marcas, and did not discourage René de Brouage, who had spent a whole evening with her and her father under the shady trees of the Tivoli Gardens, to the great despair of the jealous student. Octavie had even gone so far as to introduce Viscount Fabien to M. de Saint-Hélier when they had met him near the magician's grotto.

It is true that she had not yielded to the wishes of Count René, when he wanted on the spot to ask her father for her hand in marriage. She had represented to him that before taking this decisive step he ought to settle his family affairs, and above all arrange matters with his brother; for the chevalier, being a practical man, would wish his son-in-law to have an independent and well defined position. René had yielded to her representations, which she had made without heeding whether Marcas, who was near them, heard what she said or not.

Such was the position of affairs, and some days had elapsed without M. de Saint-Hélier hearing anything more, when one night, after receiving a select party in his rooms on the Place Royale, he as usual gave Octavie a fatherly kiss upon her snowy brow, and then retired into his bedroom. Three o'clock was just struck by the antique clock upon the chimney-piece. It was surely time for an old man like him to be in bed. That evening the chevalier had been entertaining his guests by reading a new tragedy, by a royalist author, a tragedy which the liberals had hissed at the Odéon, but which had positively charmed the chevalier's listeners. However, if, after taking leave of him, they had been able to see through the walls of his bedroom, they would have witnessed a strange sight. Their host, instead of undressing, was now making ready to go out. He doffed his evening attire for a dark frock coat, his pumps for top-boots, and, finally, he enveloped himself in a box cloak, and put on a large "Bolivar" hat. Thus clad, and with a black wig as an additional disguise, no one could have recognised him.

He slipped out of his bedroom, locked it, put the key in his pocket and went down a long passage which ran through the whole house and led to a private staircase. At the farther end a secret door opened upon the Rue des Tournelles, a good distance consequently from the front entrance on the Place Royale. Saint-Hélier must have been in the habit of using this private way very often, for the door opened easily and the lock worked without any noise.

Once in the street he began to walk briskly along, as though he knew perfectly well which street to take. He crossed the district where René de Brouage had met with so unlucky an adventure, the Saint-Martin quarter, then the Saint-Denis district, and finally he came near the Halles.

Where was he going in this way? Only a very wise man could have guessed. The few passers-by whom he met took him for a poor devil of a doctor who was obliged to pay his night visits on foot. He went along very fast, grumbling about the chilly spring breeze which blew in his face.

"It is hard indeed that at my age I should be obliged to run about the streets instead of sleeping in bed," he muttered. "And there is no way of taking a cab. My good friends in the Marais would soon know that I was out of the house from three till seven. If I had but the two trips I should not care; I have good legs, but to wear out my eyes deciphering hand-writing that is the deuce of it! It is the meanest business on the face of the earth! And to think that I have been at it since 1814 and am not rich yet! A fine salary, and a good chance ahead, but no capital! True,

to get hold of some I only need a good opportunity, but none ever comes in my way, and, perhaps, none ever will ! Loquetières, now, has had some good luck. He has his pile safe and it will soon be bigger. He was saying yesterday that if he succeeded in catching the head of the Carbonari, or even Count Henri's murderer, he would win a splendid reward ! If Octavie has any sense she will marry him instead of thinking about grandeur. But there is no making her listen to reason. If I gave her half a million as a dowry she would be more willing to listen to me. Well ! well ! perhaps I shall find the money somewhere."

This soliloquy brought Saint-Héliér to the Pointe Saint-Eustache.

He took the Rue Coquillière, then the Rue du Coq-Héron, and after a few turns—evidently premeditated—he stopped before a small door, in the midst of a building which had no other entrance.

The street was deserted and the building seemed uninhabited. The chevalier looked around him, and after making sure that he was not watched, took a key from his pocket, opened the mysterious door, entered a hall dimly lighted by a smoky lamp, and passed on, after closing the portal behind him. At the end of the hall he found a staircase which led to a dark passage. At the end of this there was a partition, but one of its panels was a secret door, and the chevalier knew what to do to open it. He pressed upon a knob, the panel slid back, and by the narrow opening thus afforded he slipped into a strange-looking place.

It was a large, square room with green hangings, quite destitute of windows. It derived its ventilation, but no light, from two air-holes with wooden shutters outside. It communicated, however, by a wicket aperture with another room, which was evidently occupied, as a sound of paper rustling was heard inside it. The furniture was of the plainest description. It consisted of an immense table, a sliding-desk, and a large leather seated armchair. On the table there were three lighted lamps ; on the desk two more.

Saint-Héliér was evidently expected, and his assistants had prepared everything so that he might fulfil the functions which brought him there. They had set official letter-paper, an inkstand and pens, as well as a sand-box, pen-knives, and erasers, in readiness ; in fact, the usual outfit of a writing-table, and some unusual utensils besides ; for instance, there were some knives with delicate blades, of odd shape, stamps, jars of paste and gum, and a small kettle of boiling water over a chafing dish. Such things as these are never seen in the office of a secretary or head-clerk ; and as the clerks in a minister's office do not set to work before sunrise, it was clear that the business which devolved upon the chevalier must be of a very special character. He seemed to be quite at home. Scarcely had he entered than he had slipped off his cloak and hat, hung them up on hooks placed for that purpose, and glanced at the wicket peep-hole. In the next room there were three men standing at a table, and hastily manipulating a pile of papers.

"Are you finishing ?" asked Saint-Héliér.

"We are waiting for the in-coming mail," replied one of the night-workers. "Yesterday's off mail is classified. You will find the delayed letters on the large table, Monsieur le Chevalier. They are arranged. The list of freshly suspected persons is on the desk."

Apparently satisfied with the zeal of his assistants, Octavie's father closed the wicket and went towards his desk. "These lamps fairly blind me ; I shall lose my eye-sight with their infernal glare !" he muttered.

"It is amusing," he added, with a sneer, "to think that the liberals call this the 'Dark Room!'"

He had said the word. This strange apartment, destitute of windows, which opened only at night-time, and then only to a small number of persons who were initiated into its secrets, was the Post-Office "Dark Room," the Cabinet Noir itself.

And this name in those times needed only to be mentioned for people to begin talking in whispers, as if to speak aloud would expose the whole conversation to be repeated, just as the secrets contained in letters were betrayed. This was because the prying into private correspondence was a hundred times more to be dreaded than the prying into people's mere actions.

In the "Dark Room" people's very thoughts were spied upon, and no one could be sure of escaping this inquisition which did not respect private revelations any more than political statements. In 1821 no one doubted its existence, although it could not be established, such were the precautions taken.

However, the Dark Room had long been in full force and had been perfected by time. It had first been started, it was said, at Hamburg, where it had served the magistrates of that liberal city for spying upon the commercial operations of the citizens, and it was introduced into France under Louis XIV. Under the latter's successor it assumed vast importance, for it served to amuse the King when he felt dull. Every day a collection of scandalous stories was collected from private correspondence to amuse the weary monarch. Louis XVI. wished to do away with the institution, but did not succeed; the National Assembly of 1789 ordered it to be suppressed, but later on the Committee of Public Safety revived it.

Under the empire it worked on unceasingly, and after the fall of Napoleon the victims of the system alone changed. In the time of the usurper the letters of royalists had been unsealed. The government of the Restoration, in retaliation, unsealed the letters of Bonaparte's upholders.

It would be a great mistake to imagine that the postal service took any part in these rascally proceedings. Some of its employés unknowingly helped them on; that is to say, by orders from superiors and under more or less plausible pretexts, certain letters were set aside before despatch and before delivery. But the odious business of violating the secrecy of private correspondence was exclusively confided to a few men who had nothing to do with the post-office. And, besides, these only prepared the work which was accomplished by one man alone, a responsible director. This individual crept in at night, like a robber, to a secret place where his assistants had already laid the marked letters. The necessary instruments were there all ready for his vile business: delicate blades by which envelopes could be opened, wax to take the impressions of seals, hot irons to melt the wax, and the steam of boiling water to soften wafers.

The work was quickly and methodically accomplished. The names of suspected persons whose letters were to be examined and fac-similes of suspicious handwritings, were every day sent to the men charged with sorting the correspondence.

The missives set aside were handed to clerks belonging to the Dark Room, disguised as postmen. These rascals took them to their den, where they classified them to help the head workman in his labours, and he himself opened them, copying the most important, making extracts from others of whatever it was to the government's interests to know, closing

them again so skilfully that it could not be seen that they had been tampered with, and finally, sending them to the regular offices where nothing was suspected, and whence they were forwarded to their addressees. Twenty-four hours' delay in the letters for the provinces, and five or six hour's delay in those for Paris, was all that followed upon all this manœuvring.

It may be guessed that a director of unusual skill was needed. The least of what was required of him was extreme discretion. State secrets, the life and the honour of all sorts of people, were at the mercy of this government spy. He had to be intelligent and reliable, reliable under all circumstances, and of superior intellect, for the exactitude of his reports could not be controlled, as there was no one to watch what he did. Fouché, Duke of Otranto, who organised the Dark Room under the Consulate, said, respecting the requisites needed to constitute a good director of this shameful service: "He is perfect only if, after finding in a letter that his wife is deceiving him and his son conspiring, he exposes his son and smiles in his wife's face." This definition is almost as able as that attributed to Talleyrand, to the effect that "a good diplomatist was a man who could be kicked from behind without letting those in front see that such a thing had occurred."

Fouché did not find such a treasure as he wanted. The Republic, having disorganised everything, including the police and the services attached to it, had to content itself with employing a set of scoundrels without shame or conscience, who remained in office until the fall of the Empire.

The old monarchy had made the direction of the Dark Room a hereditary affair. Just as, ever since 1685, the Sanson family had been public executioners, so the ancestors of the beautiful Octavie had, ever since the time of Louvois, carried on their secret and terrible work from father to son. They were not chevaliers, and their name was not Saint-Hélier. They belonged to an old family of Parisian citizens—a family not yet extinct now-a-days—and they had a very lucrative though far from honourable post. Well paid and with the certainty of receiving a large salary all their life long, protected by those they served, these Saint-Héliers, before the Revolution, had professed to be respectable and had gone among respectable people. They married the daughters of merchants or contractors, innocent creatures to whom they did not speak of their sorry work, and who bore them sons, the eldest of whom was destined to inherit the direction of the Dark Room operations.

Loquetieres' friend was the last of his race. In 1789, he was twenty-five years old, and was already helping his father, when the National Assembly suppressed the office to which he had been destined to succeed. It did not suppress the executioner however, so Sanson continued at work, but Saint-Hélier, having nothing further to do, "emigrated," exactly as though he had been a nobleman.

After wandering about for several years, on the Rhine, in Italy and in Austria, he had ended by settling in England, where he had become a secret agent of the Count de Provence. That prince, on coming to the throne as Louis XVIII., had not forgotten the chevalier, and in 1814 the latter was reinstated in the post which he had lost through the Revolution. Saint-Hélier, more a "chevalier" than ever, came back to France bringing with him Octavie, the offspring of his marriage with a Venetian woman. He had been a widower for ten years, and as he did not seem disposed to marry again, it was likely that the direction of the Dark Room would pass to another family. Saint-Hélier would have been quite resigned to this

contingency which he expected, had Octavie's future only been secured. Unfortunately, he had lived in poverty when abroad, and since his return to France had found neither the time nor a chance for economizing. He received good pay, but was obliged to make a certain amount of display. So it followed that Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier's dowry merely consisted of expectations.

This was a great sorrow and a source of great care to the good chevalier, who loved his daughter dearly, although he was not naturally affectionate. Not a year went by without the discoveries which he made in the letters he opened, sending either to the galleys or the scaffold some dozens of poor fellows who were fools enough to conspire and to betray it by writing. Now he cared no more for these men than for the gudgeon which he caught when politics left him time to go fishing. But he would willingly have given his life for his only daughter, the wonderful Octavie, whose father he was so proud of being.

It could not be said this golden-haired beauty was physically like him, for she resembled her mother, a Venetian lady of high rank, whom poverty had forced to marry a doubtful sort of gentleman. However, she was like him in mind and disposition. He felt that he lived again in her, and not being able to leave her his post, he wished at least to find a rich husband for her.

Now, he well knew that beauty does not always suffice to win suitors, and he feared that Octavie, in spite of all her attractions, might end by being left, as the saying goes, "to put on Sainte-Catherine's cap," so he made up his mind to have a fortune for her, by means foul, if not fair.

One notable chance offered itself to the director of the Dark Room. Numbers of secrets became known to him when he unsealed letters, and among them he might discover such as he could turn to account. It would be failing in his professional duty; but he was not scrupulous, and, besides, in his eyes, the end justified the means. However, the occasion had not yet offered, time was passing, and Octavie, engaged in complicated affairs of her own, greatly needed to make a good marriage in order to get out of her difficulties. The worthy chevalier was in rather a bad humour when he took possession of his usual seat at the desk that night. The letters which his clerk had called the delayed ones were laid upon the table near by. They were of all sorts, oblong and square, large and small, the paper of some was gray, of others white, of others again yellow; but all were sealed or secured and stamped with the post-office mark. This was the sorted pile of the night before, taken out before the departure of the mail. Saint-Hélier first tackled that portion of his task which must be completed by the time when the letters of the morning mail would arrive. He found before him, upon his desk, a tablet with a list of suspicious people, that is to say, those whose correspondence had to pass through his hands. This list was drawn up by persons of influential position, and revised, corrected, and augmented frequently, according to political necessity.

The chevalier had no right to strike out any name, but he could add any that had been omitted, and which he thought open to suspicion. Now the idea had entered his mind a few days before to write down the names of some persons whose letters he wished to examine to gratify his own curiosity. He had written down among others, those of Marcas, and René de Brouage, his daughter's suitor.

"Let me see," said he to himself, as he sat down. "I shall perhaps be luckier this time: but so far the mice haven't come into my trap."

And he began to rapidly turn over the letters lying one upon another. As he did so, he grumbled: "Always the same thing! Deputies on the opposition side, half-pay colonels, and fellows far too cunning to compromise themselves by writing letters. It is like that Spaniard who was suspected, that Hernandez—I have read his correspondence over and over no end of times, and found in it nothing but accounts sent by his overseer in Madrid. The fact is, the real conspirators are all left out. This list of suspicious people is drawn up by a set of fools. I must tell Loquetières so, that he may warn the Prefect of Police and the Director-General. It enrages me to have to look over all these stupid letters. If I could alone find an amusing one among them it would be something.

"Aha!" he added, "here is one to my secretary—one?—why there are three. If I don't find out something about him now, I never shall. Let's see number one!" This was closed with a mere wafer, which the chevalier soon softened with the steam from the hot water. "My young friend,"—he began to read—"you will oblige me by returning me the key which I lent you two months ago, on the evening of the entertainment given by the * * of the Friendship Lodge. Not having had the pleasure of meeting you since then, I have not had a chance to ask you for it, but as I now really need it I must ask you to bring it me as soon as possible. Receive my friendly greetings.

BOULARDOT.

"Druggist, corporal of the 3rd Company of the 4th Battalion of the 6th Legion, Rue Aumaire, 75."

"Three stars below the signature," said the chevalier to himself; "this Boulardot is a Freemason, and Marcas must be one, too. That isn't a very important discovery, and if I learn nothing more from the other two letters, I sha'n't know much more about him than I did before. However," he resumed, "this letter is a strange one. What can the key be that the druggist lent to my secretary, and which he has forgotten to return for two months? If I were Loquetières I should build up a perfect scaffolding of conjecture and clear up the affair. But I am not Loquetières and I don't care whether Marcas has a pass-key belonging to a national guardsman or not. Let me see the next."

This one was no better sealed than the first and not more difficult to open. "Good!" exclaimed Saint-Hélier. "More cabalistic signs: 'T. R. H. O. T. H.' What in the world can that mean?"

He did not know that it meant "the right hand on the heart," and that the members of the Brotherhood of the Coral Pin considered themselves called upon to thus begin their speeches and their letters.

"Dear Brother,"—read the chevalier—"not being able to see you for reasons which you will guess, I wish to tell you that our friends Bicheron and Lefèvre are much better. Before another week is over they will be quite well. Bicheron is the little Norman, you know. The cray-fish have not spoken, for none of us have been disturbed. Still I am mistrustful, and I recommend all our friends to be careful, beginning with yourself, who are most exposed. Meantime, till I am able to shake hands with you, believe in my fraternal feelings."

"It is signed with a B," concluded Saint-Hélier. "More and more mysterious, unknown names, perfectly enigmatical—cray-fish and exhortations to be prudent. I am beginning to think that my secretary is conspiring, the pretty fellow! and that I had better send my friend Loquetières a copy of this precious letter. Let me see number three."

It was not like the others. It was written on very fine paper, folded carefully and sealed with blue wax. It was easy to divine that it had been penned by a woman. Saint-Hélier took up a knife which he had heated and passed it carefully over the seal, which melted at once. "It's strange!" said he, looking at the address before unfolding the note. "I fancy I know this handwriting." Then, as he cast his eye over the contents, he exclaimed: "Good Heavens! I was not mistaken. It is from Octavie! What can she have to write to that fellow?"

And he eagerly read the note, which ran as follows: "Why do you force me to explain what you would have guessed if you loved me as you say you do? There was a time when you were much more apt, no doubt because you were more in love. I expressed a wish in your presence one morning in March. On the evening of that day the event that I desired occurred. Such chances do not occur twice. It will be in vain for me to say that I hate a woman, that she is desperately in love with a man, and that she would die of grief if he perished. It would do no good to say this. So do not question me; and, above all, change your language and manner with those whom I choose to receive. You know me; you know that I wish to be obeyed; and remember, besides, that when a man has any courage he does not make any difficulty about getting rid of a rival; he quarrels with him and kills him. I only like people who succeed. Succeed, or do not come here again. I have told my father that you wish for a week's holiday to go to see your family. He consents to let you go, and on your return he will not ask whether you have been to the south or the east."

This was all, there being no signature, but the chevalier could not make a mistake, as he knew his daughter's style. The letter fell from his hands. "This is incredible!" he muttered. "She must be mad to compromise herself like this with that scamp from Languedoc! I cannot understand it. Can she be engaged in a conspiracy with him? No, it is impossible! But what is her motive? The rival of Marcas is Count René de Brouage. I can understand that she does not want to marry him, as he has neither any fortune nor any prospects. But she cannot mean to marry that shabby southerner, whom I have so foolishly brought into my house. Who can the woman be whom she wants to kill with grief? I don't know; but if Marcas committed any crime, the police would pay dear for this letter. And Octavie hasn't even taken the trouble to disguise her handwriting. Fortunately, this fine production has fallen into my hands, and won't go any further. I shall show it to her to-day, and she will be forced to explain herself. No," resumed Saint-Hélier, after a pause, "she would not explain at all. I know her; she is like me—she never tells anything that she doesn't wish to tell. And if I suppress this letter Marcas will go to my house to-night, as usual, and I do not want him to set foot there again, for I have serious suspicions regarding him. I had better have recourse to other means. I can copy the letter, send him the copy and keep the original—the scamp will then go off without having any proof against Octavie in his possession, and before he returns I will settle the matter with her."

With this conclusion, the director of the Dark Room rose, went to the wicket, and handed the letter to one of his clerks, with orders to copy it at once. He then returned to his table, for his time was limited, and his private affairs must not be allowed to interfere with those of the govern-

ment. However, before opening the political correspondence, he determined to examine all the letters which personally interested him, and among those which had, according to his instructions, been laid apart, he now took up a note addressed to Count René de Brouage, Rue d'Artois, 92.

Saint-Hélier had now or never the chance of finding out the secrets of this nobleman, who aspired to become his son-in-law, and who certainly played an important part in connection with Octavie, although she did not desire to marry him.

The seal having been dexterously melted, the chevalier was able to peruse a letter indited in fine writing in a spreading hand, on a large sheet of well glazed paper. It ran as follows :

"Monsieur le Comte,—Do not be offended by a step which I take, owing to the deep affection which I feel for my beloved pupil, Mademoiselle Antoinette de Brouage, your cousin, who is not aware that I am writing to you, and would certainly blame me for letting you know what is going on. As she has been brought up with the ideas prevalent in this country, she cannot admit that there are circumstances in life under which social forms should be set aside, and that the heart should speak out, under penalty of great sorrow. In England we think otherwise, and I should consider myself in the wrong if I hid from you any longer what my dear Antoinette would never dare to let you know. Since the unhappy day when you last saw her she has been in utter despair. Her health has greatly suffered, and will, I fear, entirely give way.

"You must suffer as much as she, since you love her ; I may remind you of it, since you told her so yourself. We know that the general was exceedingly angry at your declaration, and that a violent scene took place between you, and that since then you have not dared to come here. It is not my place to criticise your course in this matter. If we were upon the free soil of Great Britain, I might be surprised at the resignation with which you have obeyed a very unjust command. But I know that in not trying to see your cousin, who is now your affianced bride, you wish to show that your love is influenced by the respect due to a pure and noble young girl.

"It is, however, at least allowable for me to protest against the course followed by your uncle, the Marquis de Brouage, who quite unheeding his daughter's wishes, unhesitatingly breaks her heart by falsely telling her that you love another woman whom you wish to marry. He thus hoped to induce Antoinette to give you up, and she came very near believing what her father asserted. She was so ill in consequence that for three days she lay between life and death.

"Fortunately, I was there. I did not leave her at all. I shall never leave her. And I was able to encourage her a little by reminding her that but a few moments before the deplorable scene which had occurred, and while her father was yet sleeping, you had told her of your love for her. I overheard what you said. You told Antoinette that you intended to ask your uncle to consent to your marrying a young girl whose name you did not dare to mention. That name was hers, she guessed it at once, and I assured her that she was right. How could she be wrong ? Have not your eyes long told it, although your lips were silent ? If your heart had belonged to a stranger, would you have acknowledged it to Antoinette ?

"The Marquis de Brouage, having told this falsehood, had not the courage to persist in it. After declaring openly that you were in love with an unworthy woman whom he was going to take severe measures against so as

to prevent you from marrying her, he said no more about her. He even eurtly refused to reply to my questions on the subject. His silence fully proves that my dear Antoinette's rival is a mere myth. I can assure you, count, that Mademoiselle de Brouage does not credit the story in the least, and is still faithful and will remain faithful to you, no matter what may be done to turn her against you. She relies upon you, and you may rely upon her. I venture to tell you this, and I ask you to take pity upon her and inform her, in some way or other, that your feelings have not changed. She does not suffer on account of your absence, for she well understands that you cannot set aside the cruel orders which forbid your coming to the house; but she does suffer from the uncertainty in which she has been living ever since that fatal day.

"I should have taken some decisive step had I been in her place. When I was engaged to Henry Fassitt, he received orders to start for East India on the very night before our wedding day, with the regiment in which he was an ensign, and he would have been forced to sail without seeing me, had I not gone alone to Plymouth to bid him farewell, an eternal farewell, alas! for he died very young, of liver complaint. Thanks to my energy, however, I was able to give him a chaste kiss before he departed. But forgive my mentioning what is to me a dear remembrance. I have not advised my dear pupil to imitate my own audacity, but I beg of you to write me such a reply as may be shown to Mademoiselle de Brouage. By assuring me that you still love her, and are still firmly resolved to marry her, you will restore her to life, for I solemnly swear to you that if she were forced to give you up, it would kill her. I await your reply with confidence, and am, Monsieur le Comte, your truly devoted servant,

"ELIZABETH TUFTON.

"Of the family of Lord Tufton of Coxbridge Lodge."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Saint-Hélier, "did ever mortal read such stuff as this? What a feather-head this Englishwoman must be. She is the governess of the marquis's family it seems; well, he has made a poor choice. What business of hers is this, and what puts it into her head that the count is in love with her pupil? He is in love with my daughter, and it is she whom he wishes to marry. It is true that she won't have him. However, the Englishwoman is all wrong in her notions." Then suddenly striking his forehead, the worthy chevalier muttered: "This is the meaning of Octavie's letter to Marcas. I see now! The woman who would die of grief is Mademoiselle de Brouage. The Englishwoman says so in so many words. But what interest can Octavie have in her dying? That is what puzzles me. I must have a very serious conversation with her to-day. As for this letter, I don't see anything, upon my word, that need prevent its going to the count."

And Saint-Hélier was re-sealing the letter accordingly, in the most artistic manner, when one of the clerks, who worked in the room adjoining the office, entered with a package of letters.

"Here are the reserved letters from the country," said he, "they have just come. There are very few, and if you like to attend to them, Monsieur le Chevalier, before finishing the delayed letters of yesterday, they can be included in the first morning delivery."

"I will arrange it so," replied the chevalier. "We must avoid delaying letters whenever we can."

After this sagacious remark, he finished closing-up the Englishwoman's

missive, handed it to the clerk, who placed it with the letters to be dispatched, and began to tackle the country mail. These missives interested him much less than the others, and he read them hastily, being anxious to return home to reflect upon what he had previously perused. But, at the seventeenth letter, the expression of his face suddenly changed, and he muttered: "Oho! this deserves serious attention. I really begin to think that I have found a way to make a fortune!"

The letter which had thus startled Saint-Hélier, was written on grey paper of common description, such as is still used by the peasantry. At that time, however, this was no proof that it had come from any farmhouse, for superfine note-paper had not yet been manufactured.

In former days, people were less fastidious, and collectors of autographs know well enough that the great ladies of the eighteenth century corresponded on paper that would scarcely be used now-a-days to wrap up candles. So the director of the Dark Room paid no attention to the paper, but began to examine the way in which the letter was folded.

The use of envelopes was then far from general, and this letter was simply folded in oblong fashion. However, it consisted of an outer leaf which bore a name and address, and contained a double sheet, elosed like the first, with a wafer, and covered with writing on three sides. The fourth page merely bore a name. Hence, it might be concluded, and the chevalier inferred, that the missive was not addressed to the person for whom it was really intended. And, in fact, the outer direction ran thus: "Monsieur Morlier, Professor, No. 28 Rue de l'Eperon, Paris," while the interior sheet bore the two words: "For Fabio."

This evidently meant that Monsieur Morlier was expected to hand the letter to a certain Fabio. "It comes from Bordeaux," muttered Saint-Hélier, after examining the letter again. "May 22nd. This is the 25th. There has been no delay. It bears the Bordeaux post-mark, but was not written there. The writer has dated it, 'Sunday, 20th May,' but does not give an address, and his letter was not posted till the 22nd. I must find out why that happened, but let me read the letter once more. It is worth being studied. 'My dear Fabio.' Who can 'my dear Fabio' be? It is probably a false name. It is an Italian one, whereas Morlier, the name of the go-between, is as French as can be."

"My Dear Fabio,—I have not heard from you since the end of last month, but am not surprised at your silence, knowing that matters remain in abeyance, and that there is probably nothing to tell. I shall, however, be very glad to receive a letter, for I am somewhat uneasy as to the health of our friends, and the prosperity of our enterprise; and I have a great deal of leisure, so that your notes are very acceptable to me. I am not dull, however, in my idleness. My hosts do all they can to entertain me, and I am beginning to grow accustomed to the life I lead here. What annoys me the most is, that I never hear of a person whom you know so well, and whom I miss more and more every day. If you know where she is, and why she does not write, you will greatly oblige me by letting me know.

"Passing on to matters of importance, I hasten to say that nothing unfavourable has occurred since my last of May 5th. The good people who are watching over our capital take good care of it, and I am careful to stimulate their zeal.

"So far, all goes well; but I must tell you that it would be right to

inform our employer that things cannot remain as they are without serious trouble resulting. My presence would end by exciting the curiosity of the inhabitants of a town near by, and I have already heard that remarks are made. It has also been noticed that our friends are neglecting their usual pursuits. It is a subject of surprise that they are no longer seen at the neighbouring markets.

"The reason is a very simple one: they cannot absent themselves. Their responsibility is too great, and there are but four to take turns. My responsibility is as great as theirs, and there are days when it actually terrifies me, the more from the fact that, in spite of all the security offered by the place of deposit, it is not beyond danger of surprise. You know better than anyone how the château is situated, and the facilities for entering it. It is almost impossible to prevent its being entered and even explored throughout. Lately several visits have occurred. Idlers of the neighbourhood come on pleasure-parties and content themselves with breakfasting on the platform of the tower, and antiquarians are drawn here by the traditional interest attached to the ruins themselves.

"The latter are by far the more dangerous. They do not, like the others, limit themselves to admiring the view from the keep; they inspect the fortress from top to bottom, measure it, draw plans of it, and, I really believe, count the stones and number them. The worst of it is that the vaults interest them the most. They come with torches to examine them, and walk about for entire hours at a time. The other day one fellow came who declared that he had read in a book that there were underground dungeons or oubliettes below the great tower, and that he wished to dig, by all means, and find them.

"Imagine my alarm, our capital being all deposited in the hole which was filled up with sand by our sailor brethren on the night of the landing. The old idiot would be greatly astonished to find tons of gold instead of the skeletons and chains which he wanted to look for.

"Fortunately, your servants made him so drunk with the heavy wines and old brandy of the country that he forgot the dungeons entirely. But he may come back, and he will, and is likely to bring some of the authorities with him, for he is, it appears, in their employ. In that case, all would be lost. We could only kill the whole of them, and that could not be managed without its being known. Besides, even although we got rid of them, it would do no good. We could not remove the treasure without knowing where to take it.

"This is not all. The visitors who come by land necessarily pass near the farm, so we have time to take measures against them. But there are others who come by water from the island which faces us, or the great mercantile port some ten leagues away. They land at the foot of the ruins and enter without giving the least notice. Last week one of these parties of visitors found Jean—you remember him—on guard in the cellar, and he was obliged to make up a story to explain what he was about.

"I enter into all these details, my dear Fabio, to make you understand that the situation cannot last, and that it is important to let the head of our firm know all this as soon as possible, so that he may make the necessary arrangements. It seems to me that the time for removing our funds has come; if I may believe what our friends who read the newspapers say the time would be very favourable indeed for the success of the intended speculation. If the removal is to take place, you alone can direct it, and I hope to have the satisfaction of seeing you here.

"Tell our director that he may dispose of my services as he pleases, either if he wishes to keep me in Paris when all is arranged, or to send me abroad. Tell him that if he resolves upon the latter course, I beg of him to send me where a friend dear to us all now is. I await your reply impatiently, and I presume that it will reach me as agreed upon between us. I send this letter by a friend on whom I rely, and who will post it at Bordeaux. By this means it cannot be known whence it comes, should it fall into bad hands. On account of this security, I explain everything more clearly than I usually do. But I shall not be at ease in my mind until I hear from you. This is all, my dear Fabio, and may God and the blessed Virgin keep you and preserve our brethren from all harm !

"YOUR DEVOTED SISTER."

"Your devoted sister and no name at all is rather vague, it strikes me," said the chevalier to himself as he finished reading. "But one thing is certain, and that is that the letter comes from a woman. I did not think so at first. The writing is bold, and there is nothing about it to indicate the sex of the writer. But what is this? There is a postscript in a corner. Let's see."

"We must provide against any contingency. If our chief should be obliged to send me, in place of yourself, a messenger unknown to me, I think that for safety's sake he had best come to the farm disguised as a pedlar. To make himself known to me, he need only say when he opens his packages: 'Will you buy some pins? I have all sorts;' and I shall reply: 'Have you any coral pins?' and when we have exchanged these words, we shall soon understand each other."

"This time that's everything," muttered Saint-Hélier, resuming his soliloquy, "but it is enough for me to hold one end of the thread that will perhaps lead me to wealth. Tons of gold—those are the very words, tons—that is to say, millions, buried in an old château on the seashore, millions, which belong to any man who may be skilful enough to lay his hands on them. That is the problem to be solved! And these millions can be taken without trouble from the authorities, as their owner will take good care not to claim them. The letter says that they were placed there by the head of a commercial house. Such a transparent falsehood as that wouldn't deceive a child. Merchants deposit their money in banks instead of letting it lie in vaults. Besides, nowadays there are very few merchants who own millions of money. This treasure, then, must belong to some secret society; the pretended director of the firm who has thus deposited tons of gold in a vault, is nothing less than the leader of a band of robbers or conspirators. In either case, it would be right to seize upon ill-gotten riches or money intended for a bad purpose."

Elated by this pleasing thought, the chevalier rose, and quite forgetting that he had other missives to unseal, began to walk up and down the dark room with the precious letter in his hand.

"What a dowry for Octavie!" he muttered. "She would not need to try to win an old peer of France. She could win a young one. But I haven't got the millions yet. I do not even know where they are. I will know, however. With the information given here by that obliging correspondent, and the help of a geographical dictionary, I should be a fool, indeed, if I did not discover the hiding-place. A ruined château on the seashore, a historical onc, which archæologists visit, and which is connected

with a farm near an important town, ten leagues from a commercial port, and at only one or two days' journey from Bordeaux, where the letter was posted, that can't be hard to find, even without a geographical chart, and I will find it. Let me see—near Bordeaux there are the Landes, but thereabouts there are no important cities or ports. Bayonne is too far off—and a château on the sea-shore. On the coast there are nothing but sandbanks and pine trees. I must look in the opposite direction. Let me read again." After glancing once more at the letter, the tender father exclaimed: "An island in front—a province that produces heavy wines and brandy—I see it now!—it is Saintonge—Rochefort, that is the town, La Rochelle is the port. Octavie, you shall be rich!"

But this outburst of enthusiasm soon died away, and he began to reason with himself. "How shall I set to work?" he reflected. "To remove the treasure is all very well, but that isn't all. It must be carried away, and tons of gold cannot be carried off on one's back—tons of gold," repeated the chevalier, and his eyes sparkled as though the treasure lay before him. "There is one safe plan. It is to go to the director-general and tell him that I am on the track of a secret which interests the state, and make my own terms. I should be allowed fifty or a hundred thousand francs' reward, perhaps. But no, the thing might not find favour among influential people, and I might lose my place for having made a bad use of my functions here. No! no! I am not such a fool as to drop the substance for the shadow. What if I told Loquetières all about it? He understands such things; he has men at his orders, and he is safe. Good! but then I must share the proceeds with him, and he would want Octavie for his wife, besides; and she does not wish to marry him. Rather than do so she would expose us both. Well, well, if I did the whole thing myself? Why not? I need only ask for a fortnight's holiday. I sha'n't be refused, as it will be the first time that I have been absent since 1814. I have the pass-word. The guardians of the treasure will take me for a man sent by their chief. And once upon the ground, I will form my plan. I have carried on undertakings much more difficult than this one. Still, if before starting I could only find out who this Fabio is, my task would be much easier. I will ascertain something, first of all, about this Morlier who is the intermediary. As for the letter which gives him so much interesting information, he shall never receive it, for I shall keep it."

Saint-Héliér put the letter into his pocket as he spoke, and making up his mind to go home, he left the examination of the remaining missives for the following day. Octavie's father had not lost his time that night; but there were people in Paris who waited in vain for their letters. They got them twenty-four hours later, to be sure, and in the old times no one complained of such a trifling delay as this.

XI.

THE Chevalier de Saint-Héliér had taken upon himself to retain the letter addressed to a certain Fabio under cover to a certain M. Morlier, but he did not attempt to keep the letters to Marcas, or the sentimental epistle addressed to the Count de Brouage by Miss Elizabeth Tufton. He had his reasons for doing this, and his way of proceeding had the consequences which he had foreseen, together with some others which he had not in the least expected. At noon the student received by the same distribution the

three notes which the Director of the Dark Room had unsealed. The anonymous letter sent him by his friend the sergeant-major of the 45th gave him great satisfaction, for he had been by no means at ease as to the result of his duel with the Swiss corporal. The request made by Boulardot was less agreeable.

He knew the druggist, from having several times met him at a masonic lodge, and after a supper at which Boulardot had drunk freely he had borrowed from him a key which he had intentionally neglected to return, and did not care to take back, as he wished to make use of it on certain occasions which might present themselves at any moment. The key was that of a garden in the very midst of Paris, a garden which belonged to Boulardot, and which he sometimes opened to his friends desirous in summer of taking the air without leaving the city. He had lent the key late in the winter to Marcas, who had declared that in spite of the season he wished to walk up and down the enclosure by moonlight with a *grisette* friend of his, and he thought that the student was taking advantage of his good nature. Patience has its limits, and the druggist desired to have his key back at once, but he did not receive it, Marcas having other matters to attend to before going to the Rue Aumaire to return an object which he wished to keep.

The young secretary soon forgot the corporal's letter, for, after reading it, he lighted upon the note from Octavie, which completely overcame him. It was not in the hand-writing of the beauty with the irresistible eyes, as the chevalier had retained the original, and had merely sent a copy made by one of his clerks, but Marcas soon guessed its source. Octavie de Saint-Hélier had a way of thinking and of expressing herself which was altogether original, and her admirer could not make a mistake. She ruled him so completely that he obeyed her like a slave, and she did not hesitate to express her desires plainly.

He perfectly well understood what she wished, all the more as at Tivoli Gardens he had heard a part of her conversation with René de Brouage. Octavie knew how to speak as well as to write. She lowered her voice when necessary and raised it with equal discretion. Marcas could only hear what she had wished him to hear of her conversation with the count. She had begged René, in a low tone, not to ask at once for her hand in marriage, and she had requested him aloud to repair to Brouage.

René had replied in the same way that he had decided to make the journey, and that he should start in a very few days. The student who was following them, endeavouring to control his anger, knew very well what to think of his rival's plans and the true meaning of the somewhat mysterious words at the end of Octavie's letter. At the same time, he learned that she had spoken to the chevalier to account for his absence. This was ordering him, very plainly, to use the holiday which she had obtained for him for the purpose of executing her commands.

They were clear enough. He must quarrel with René de Brouage so as to remove him from Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier's path. She seemed to wish that the duel should take place outside of Paris ; for instance, on the journey which the count was about to undertake. Marcas was entirely willing to conform in every particular to these instructions, which would have appeared most odious to any other man. He hated all who courted Octavie, and at a sign from her he would have fought a duel every day. Still he did not wish to fight too near to the Prefecture of Police. The

death of the Swiss corporal was too recent, the search for the culprit was not yet over, and the detectives were still on the watch.

The thrust in the eye—the student's favourite game, his secret means of getting rid of his enemies—was calculated to arouse suspicion. To use it in Paris a second time within a few days would be exposing himself as regards the tragedy of the *King Clovis*.

Upon the country high roads, on the contrary, Marcas could do as he pleased. Several days were then required to go from Paris to Brouage, whatever might be the mode of travel. It was only necessary to make arrangements to follow René, whether he went by post or coach. As for opportunities for picking a quarrel, the student was a perfect master of the art of provoking people, and was at no loss as to that point. He had indeed thought of attacking the count before Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier had written to him, and if he had not made preparations to do so, it was for different reasons, of which one still existed. In the first place, he still hoped that Octavie would cease to resist his advances, and he did not wish to leave her; and besides he did not know when M. de Brouage would start.

On the first point his mind was now made up. Octavie wished that he should start, and would not smile upon him till he returned. The second did not seriously embarrass him. The count had no motive for making a secret of his departure from Paris. In order to find out the truth, he, Marcas, could question the doorkeeper at the house in the Rue d'Artois.

Unfortunately, however, there was another obstacle, Marcas had no money or but little. The small allowance sent him by his father, was always spent during the first week in the month, and he was then reduced to living on credit until the 31st, when he regularly received a draft for a hundred and fifty francs. He could not complain of his father, for in those days students could live very well in the Quartier Latin on a much smaller amount. Victorin, who was thought to belong to a wealthy family, had at first found no difficulty in borrowing small sums, but he had so often done so that he now owed money to many persons. Since he had been courting Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier, he had spent a good deal of money in dressing in the latest style, and Carbonarism drew something from his means also. He was obliged to offer some refreshment to the brethren and friends of the Association, to subscribe to the entertainments at which the favourite toast was "death to tyrants," and to contribute for the help of political prisoners. The Coral Pin assisted a great many of the affiliated members; but Marcas was not among them. He conspired at his own expense.

Thus it was that on the day when he received the letter from Octavie he had but forty francs in his possession, and these had been advanced to him at the Mont de Piété on some winter clothing. He would soon receive his monthly allowance, but it was necessary to have at least two hundred francs to undertake the journey, and it was also necessary to decide matters at once. Now, when the southerner had once decided upon anything, he carried it out, cost what it might. He cared little how, providing he succeeded. This is why, after having read and re-read the letter from Octavie and counted and re-counted the small amount which constituted his entire possessions, he left the house with the laudable intention of going to question the doorkeeper at the Count de Brouage's house, stopping at Frascati's on his way.

Gambling was Marcas's resource in desperate moments, and he had more than once got out of great difficulties by his success at play. When the

baroness's rooms had been available, he had not often risked money there, but simply because the stakes were too heavy for his purse. However, the gambling rooms kept by the wealthy Boursault did not scorn small stakes. At No. 113, in the Palais Royal, they even ran as low as forty sous, and Marcas, with his forty francs, could even have a try at the large table at Frascati's, where the lowest stake was a louis. He had his choice, all the more, as on the way from the Rue des Grès to the Rue d'Artois—now the Rue Laffitte—he had to pass in front of almost all the licensed gambling-houses. He did not stop at those in the stone galleries, but proceeded to the Rue Vivienne by the steps which the Paris speculators had abandoned as a meeting-place three years before. The present Bourse or Stock Exchange was not established until 1826, but a provisional exchange had been built in the Rue des Filles Saint-Thomas, and in the evening the money-mongers met on the Boulevard Montmartre in front of the Passage des Panoramas. However, on certain days and at certain hours, there was still a crowd on the old flight of steps, once the great Paris money-market.

The Royal Lottery was drawn on the 5th, the 15th, and the 25th of every month at the Hotel du Trésor in the Rue Neuve-des-Champs, the spot where the Bibliothèque Nationale now stands. Now it happened that on that day, May 25th, five winning numbers were to be drawn, and ticket-holders were besieging the door of the room where the drawing was to take place. At the time of the Restoration lotteries were in full feather, and nothing could be more curious than the coming out of the "criers" to announce the fiat of fate, without mentioning the serenades given at night by the drummers of the national guard, outside the houses of those who won. Agents of the former general of lotteries ran about the streets proposing infallible numbers, and found many customers, for there were plenty of big prizes duly advertised in the newspapers. The players had not yet lost the recollection of a "quaternary prize," won by a man from Marseilles, in 1810, which amounted to 689,000 francs. At least, ten quaternaries were won every year. More recently, on the 5th of August, 1817, a person had won 226,000 francs on a "terme" made up of the numbers 18, 27, and 72. Encouraged by these examples, the Parisians entered into lottery ventures most passionately, and Marcas often risked a few francs on the chances which were even more uncertain than those at roulette. But he had never been lucky, and had at last become disgusted.

Still he now thought of having a try, for his need of money was imperative, and he decided to devote five francs to purchasing a ticket. He was the more induced to do so by the certainty of knowing the result of the venture at once. So he hastened to an office at the corner of the Rue Vivienne, but arrived there too late. Twelve o'clock was striking. It was the hour for drawing out the numbers, and the door was closed in his face. He was obliged to turn to Frascati's, and as he went on he had the misery of hearing several boys shout out, as they ran quickly by, that 16, 78, 9, 75, and 1 had won. As is always the case with credulous buyers of lottery tickets, he at once imagined that he would unfailingly have held one of these lucky numbers, and this disappointment seemed to him an unfavourable omen. The day was beginning badly.

He went on his way, grumbling to himself, and his bad humour steadily increasing. Suddenly, at the corner of the Rue Feydeau, he thought that he saw someone following him and experienced considerable alarm.

This person was an old man who did not look like a spy. He was fairly well dressed in the old style, more like a citizen of 1789, however, than

like a noble *émigré*. He had a fine head of white hair, which made his severe countenance seem somewhat venerable. However, Marcas did not rely upon appearances at all. He knew that spies dressed in all kinds of costumes, and he had remarked, while crossing the Palais Royal, that this old man was always at his heels.

He found him again at the corner of the Rue Vivienne; and this was quite enough to put him on his guard. He did not care to go to the Rue d'Artois, as long as suspicious persons persisted in walking behind him. So to throw this fellow off the track, he thought that the best thing he could do would be to turn in at Frascati's. If the man was merely a harmless citizen, he would not dare to enter a gambling-house in broad daylight. If he did, it would be because he had orders to watch Marcas. The student, therefore, tried the experiment. He reached Frascati's by the Rue de Richelieu, crossed the threshold of the fashionable "hell," and while going up the grand staircase leading to the saloons on the first floor, he looked over the banisters. The old man was in the vestibule.

"Good!" said Marcas, "I know what to think; he is a spy. So I am watched; I have been pointed out to him. My visit to the Count de Brouage's would be remarked and would form the subject of a report to the police. I will defer going there. I will go to the tables and remain as long as I can; if I am cleaned out I will take the air in the garden and an ice, providing I have the money to pay for it. This Judas with a double-breasted waistcoat will perhaps get tired of watching me, and if he persists in following, he will have his trouble for his pains, for I shall go quietly home to the Rue des Grès. Delay is better than disaster." And Victorin continued going up the stairs, but not without turning round more than once. The man came up also, setting foot upon the first step at the moment when the student reached the first landing.

It was not much more than noon and the rooms had scarcely opened. At so early an hour Frascati's was not nearly so brilliant and bustling as at night, when a hundred lamps flooded it with light. In the cold glare of day everything looked differently. Glance at dancers when the dawn begins to pale the lights in a ballroom, and you will understand the effect produced upon an uninterested person by the sight of *trente et quarante* in the full sunlight. At Frascati's at night, the brightness of the lamps gave the croupiers a kind of fantastic charm. With a little imagination a novice might have taken them for high priests celebrating the mystic rites of the worship of the Golden Calf. At night too the players prided themselves upon looking cheerful. Those who won put on a careless air and affected to despise money. Those who lost controlled their rage. Some even tried to smile. Those who were completely beggared got up and went away, perhaps to blow out their brains at home, but without letting their despair be seen. There were even some of them who bowed to the head croupier just as the gladiators saluted Cæsar before they died. All, executioners and victims, conquered and conquerors, kept up appearances before the women present—young women, pretty and richly dressed, who were surely no honour to their sex, still, not such as are seen now-a-days in such places.

In those days such women did not make fortunes. They had a short season of splendour, a comet-like glory, and finished off at the hospital, and they did not deceive themselves as to the end that awaited them. The women at Frascati's formed a class apart, between the actresses who were the favourites of fashion and the creatures who walked up and down the wooden galleries of the Palais Royal, and the *grisettes* whom Paul de Kock

wrote so much about in his time. They had some analogy with the famous Venetian women who frequented the *ridotti* where patricians, whose names were inscribed in the Golden Book, alone had the right to play *faro*. Every six months the directors of the gambling-houses gave these useful auxiliaries prizes for beauty and elegance—a kind of contrast to the traditional crowning of the Rosière of Nanterre. Some of these laureates, later in life, hanged themselves, so as to avoid starving to death. The most fortunate among them married philosophic croupiers, but this was rare, as these gentlemen liked dowries. This is why the race disappeared amid political turmoil, just like some kinds of birds are supposed to have done during the deluge.

However, in the halcyon times, at Frascati's the women gave the saloon a lively look. But they only came at night, when there was high play going on, when passionate gamblers were risking their very bread to gain the Golden Fleece, and proved ready for amusement after the victory was won.

In the daytime, Frascati's was merely frequented by people who believed in martingales, and mathematicians who made use of Alembert's method and practised systems, passing their lives in trying to solve gambling problems, quite as difficult matters as the squaring of the circle. These people never smiled or hid their ill-humour when fortune failed to favour them. The croupiers who held them in contempt would often yawn in their faces. And so the noontday sun only shone on surly and weary countenances.

When Marcas entered the large saloon he saw around the main table, that called the "golden" one, a dozen veterans, old gamblers crouching over papers covered with figures and making holes in the cards furnished by the administration. But for the gold piled up in front of the croupiers, and the sound of the rakes which served to bring in the stakes, the assembly might have been taken for a meeting of learned mathematicians. The student did not care whether he disturbed the old fogies or not by coming in among them like a bombshell, but he would not begin to play until he knew what the spy meant to do.

He saw him coming in and advance forward hat in hand. In other gambling-houses it was necessary to leave one's hat and take a ticket for it to obtain it again. This precaution was adopted to prevent thieves from plundering the tables, and rushing into the street, which they could not very well do without hats on their heads. But Frascati's was a bad place full of good company, as the phrase goes, and it was not thought possible that any thieves could get in there.

Marcas turned his back to the man who was thus dogging his footsteps, and took his stand behind an old "martingaler" whose bald head shone like an ivory billiard-ball. He did not trouble about the old calculator who stamped and started whenever he lost, but on the opposite side of the table, playing a "series," he saw a man he knew: Fabien de Brouage.

Marcas had long been acquainted with him by sight. He had been in the habit of seeing him at the baroness's, and had recently met him at the Tivoli Gardens. He also knew that the viscount belonged to the Carbonari and occupied an important position among the brethren of the Coral Pin, but he had never had any intercourse with him, and naturally he felt but little sympathy for Count René's brother. Fabien, on his part, detested the secretary ever since he had overheard him, not far from the "Russian mountain," expressing his hatred of the whole Brouage family. How-

ever, moderation is necessary among conspirators, who are forced to keep peace among themselves as long as they belong to the same society.

The viscount did not perceive that Marcas was present. He was entirely absorbed in his game, and fortune continued to favour him, at which he was well pleased. Before finding Stella Negroni once more, he had simply played to forget and almost with the wish to lose. But since he had seen her again he played, on the contrary, in the hope of winning a large sum with which he meant to carry out a bold project. The student had his reasons for keeping aloof from Fabien, and was about to retire when he saw the man with the double-breasted waistcoat cross the saloon without coming near the table. He watched him and saw him go out by a glass door leading to the garden. "Was I wrong?" said Marcas to himself. "This man may only be an inoffensive individual, after all. However, I have no desire to run after him, and while he is taking the air on the terrace I will make off by the Rue Richelieu."

He was about to do so when a diabolical thought came into his mind. "A good idea!" said he to himself. "I will begin by staking my two louis. This Brouage has staked on the black; his 'series' must be run through by now. I will put my money on the red; if he persists in keeping to the black and luck comes to me, I shall win what he loses; his money will enable me to give chase to his brother, who will have a bad time of it if I catch him. The viscount will enable me to catch the count. That will be a good joke!"

So Marcas remained in the room and drew from his pocket the two twenty-franc pieces which he still possessed. Just then there was a fresh start and Fabien staked a heavy sum on the black. Marcas won on the red. This augured well. The game went on. At the third turn the four louis were doubled. At the sixth, the student had thirteen hundred francs of his own. Fabien, who had continued staking on the black and had been playing very heavily, had lost all his winnings, and probably all the money he had about him, for he rose to go.

As he did so, he caught sight of Marcas and frowned; however, he contented himself with giving the secretary a glance of contempt and went away from the table. "He is cleaned out," thought Marcas with exultation. "I must have one more venture. With a hundred and twenty-eight louis I shall have enough to begin with, and I will give the elder Brouage a touch of my secret thrust."

Delighted with this idea, he let his winnings remain upon the table, and for a time it seemed that fortune would favour him once more, for the black had thirty-nine. But the king of spades gave the fatal point of forty to the red, and crushed all Marcas's ambitious hopes. The rake swept away his pile of gold. He had but one louis left him, he threw it angrily down and lost it also. And as a climax of ill-luck, on turning round he found himself face to face with Fabien.

He felt tempted to fly at his throat, so furious did he feel at having been beaten, and at having, as a witness of his defeat, a man whom he so thoroughly hated. However, the Viscount de Brouage did not give him time to utter a single insulting word, but began to attack himself by saying: "I have something to say to you. Let us step aside."

Thereupon he walked to a corner of the room followed by Marcas, who asked nothing better than to quarrel.

"Now, sir," said Fabien in a dry tone, "you have not forgotten that we met at Tivoli Gardens. I did not have an opportunity to speak with you

alone that evening ; but, as I now have one, I desire to tell you that I heard you threaten my brother's life."

"You must have spied upon me," interrupted Marcas.

"If we were not both of us in the service of the same cause, I should call you to account for your conduct. But you know very well that we must not fight. I therefore defer the satisfaction which I have a right to demand of you till another time. Still I declare to you that if anything happens to my brother, I shall call you to account for it at once. I will not fight with you, but I shall kill you as I would kill a mad dog, unless indeed I follow another course, which will be to hand you over to such justice as the grand-master of the Coral Pin Association will mete out to you."

"I don't understand what you mean," replied Marcas, disdainfully.

"You will understand. My brother does not belong to our Association, but he does not try to harm us. If you attack him it will be from personal motives, and to serve the designs of a woman whose lover you are. I need not name that woman, but we justly suspect her, and I can tell you that your acquaintance with her has been made known to the high *venta*."

"By you, of course."

"No, by a man much more influential than myself in the high *venta*. I don't know what will be the result of the denunciation, but I swear to you that if you injure my brother I will myself accuse you, and declare that you are the tool of the daughter of that Chevalier de Saint-Hélier, who is the intimate friend of a spy, and probably a spy himself." Thereupon without waiting for a reply, Fabien turned his back upon the student and left the saloon.

Marcas would perhaps have rushed out after him, but to his utter amazement, he saw that the old man with the double-breasted waistcoat was looking through the window which opened upon the terrace, and making signs to him to come to him. The young secretary asked himself whether he was asleep or awake, and there was good reason for surprise.

The person whom he had supposed to be a spy was smiling at him and making friendly signals. What could he have to say to him, and why had he gone to wait for him outside, instead of speaking to him in the saloon? Had he witnessed his interview with Fabien de Brouage?

The student at last concluded that the old man was not a secret agent, for secret agents only approach those whom they are told to watch, for the purpose of arresting them. And the police were too desirous of avoiding a disturbance to arrest any one at Frascati's rooms. The viscount was probably at the bottom of the stairs by now, and besides, after reflecting, Marcas made up his mind not to follow him. Taking a decisive measure, he went rapidly through the room where he had lost his last louis, and passed out on to the terrace. The fine garden attached to the palatial gambling establishment overlooked the Boulevard Montmartre on one side, and was full of rare plants. Those who had lost their money had the consolation of walking up and down the shady walks ; those who won had an opportunity to partake of some delicious ices, and in this they never failed to invite the fair creatures who had applauded their success. So the arbours were greatly patronised, especially at night, but at noon, and in the summer, no one exposed himself to the sun on the terrace, and Marcas merely found there the stranger who had beckoned to him to join him.

This respectable individual came forward, bowed politely, unceremoniously took Victorin's arm, and led him to a shady arbour where they could talk without being overheard. The student allowed himself to be led. He

had already regained full confidence, and thought that his companion must be some professor of gambling, such as still exist at Monaco, and was going to offer for a "pecuniary consideration" to teach him an infallible way of winning.

"Well, my young friend," said this singular personage when they were seated side by side on a bench under some trees, "you have lost your money."

"Good!" thought Marcas, "I guessed aright."

And he curtly replied: "Yes, they have cleaned me out. I haven't even a louis to try a martingale, and if you are going to propose to tell me a secret way of winning, you have applied to the wrong person."

"You are mistaken, young man. Far from inducing you to play again, I advise you to give up gambling, which always leads to trouble."

"Did you bring me here to sermonize me?" asked Marcas with a sneer.

"May be that I did," replied the old man, with perfect composure.

"You need not take that trouble, then, for you won't reform me, and I am not in the humour to listen to you." And the student mentally added: "The devil fly away with the old idiot! Luck is really against me. I lose all my cash to begin with, and then I come across this virtuous sermonizing old parson."

"You must listen to me, however," said the old gentleman. "I have some things to say that will interest you, and I assure you that you will not regret having given me your attention."

"Oho!" thought Marcas, "have I some obliging money-lender to deal with?" And he at once looked more pleasantly at the old man, saying, "Do you wish to offer me some money? I confess that it would interest me greatly if such is your intention."

"I not only offer it, but bring it to you."

"Really! This is all the more obliging, as you don't know me."

"I beg pardon, I know you very well."

"Well, then, you know that my father owns some property in Tarn-et-Garonne. He takes his time about paying my debts, but he does pay them. You would have to wait, but I'll make that up to you in interest. Provided you don't want more than twenty per cent, it's a bargain. But I would rather tell you at once that I want a good round sum. I need four thousand francs."

"I have twenty thousand about me."

"I will take them for twenty-four thousand at one year's date, if you like. And I will give you a mortgage on a farm which was my mother's, and in which my father merely has a life interest."

Marcas was going on somewhat rapidly. He was so delighted indeed that he scarcely knew what he was saying. However, he soon saw that his companion remained utterly indifferent to his proposals. "You are not mocking me, I presume," said he. "You talked about a certain sum; it may be that you don't mean to let me have it, except on your own conditions."

"Exactly, your conditions are not mine."

"You think that twenty per cent isn't enough. But on a mortgage that isn't a bad offer—however, I don't insist. Will you take twenty-five? I will consent if we settle it now. There is a stamp-office near by, and in a quarter of an hour you will hold my note if you like. There are some formalities of course, but they won't take long, and I shall be satisfied

with a part for the present, four thousand francs, which I require for a journey that I am about to make."

"You are going to travel, I know it," said the stranger quietly.

"What do you know about it?" asked Marcas, greatly surprised. And as no answer came, he added: "How much longer are you going to trifle with me? I'm not over-patient, let me tell you."

"You ought to be, if you wish to succeed."

"Well, I am willing to wait a little longer, if you will explain yourself. I did not bring you here, you brought me here yourself. I suppose that it wasn't for the purpose of telling me that you have twenty thousand francs about you. You know what security I can give you. Lend me the money or keep it, but let us have done with the business."

"I do not wish to lend it you but to give it you."

"That's a joke, of course."

"Nothing could be less like a joke. I will give you the money on conditions that a certain use is made of it."

"If you think that I shall lose it at cards, you are mistaken. I have another use for it."

"So have I, and it is my project that must be carried out."

"I don't understand you."

"You will," replied the man in a curt tone. "Hold out your left hand."

"My left hand!" exclaimed the student with surprise.

"Yes, hold it out horizontally with the palm upward."

Marcas obeyed. He was beginning to think that his companion was not a money-lender, but a member of the Coral Pin Association; and he passed to stupefaction, when, instead of merely touching his hand in the manner usual among the brethren, the unknown made a sign with his forefinger, of which Marcas knew the significance. It was a sign that the highest officers of the Carbonari alone had the right to make use of, and which enabled them to make themselves known to subalterns. Any Carbonaro, who ventured to make use of it, unless his grade admitted of his doing so, would have incurred the punishment of death itself and could not have escaped it; for any brother to whom a leader revealed himself in this manner, was obliged to give a description of that leader to the delegate of his *venta*, who then informed the central *venta*, which, through another intermediary, acquainted the high *venta* with the facts. The organization of the different sections was so perfect, that none knew the members of the other ones, or even the names of the members of the higher sections, whose will they blindly obeyed. These names only became known in France after 1830, when those who bore them could, without danger, boast of having conspired against the government, to which many among them had sworn to be faithful.

"A leader of the Coral Pin Association!" muttered Marcas.

"Silence!" said the old man in a quiet tone. "You have now merely to listen and reply when I question you, and then to obey me."

"I am ready to do so."

"Well and good! What was the brother saying to you, to whom you spoke just now, and what were you saying to him?"

"What! did you see—"

"I have been watching you ever since you came in. You had a conversation, or rather a quarrel, with this brother. What was it about?"

Marcas hesitated for a moment, in order to find some reply not entirely false; he did not wish to tell everything, as he preferred to avoid speaking of

Count René. "It concerned a woman," he answered with some degree of boldness.

"A woman whose lover you are, although her father is intimate with a man who spies upon us."

"Her father is a royalist, I am aware of that, but I did not know that he had anything to do with the police."

"Then let me tell you that he has, and I order you besides, in the name of the supreme *venta*, to have nothing further to do with that man Saint-Héliér's daughter."

Marcas turned pale, but replied: "I will obey."

"I rely upon that, but it will not suffice to make up for your imprudent conduct. Your chiefs tried you yesterday, and came near sentencing you. As an excuse I spoke of your youth, and obtained a respite."

Marcas turned lividly pale, and reflected: "Who can have denounced me? It can only be that wretch, the Viscount de Brouage." The idea did not enter his mind that it might be Colonel Fournès, whom he scarcely knew.

"Yes, a respite," resumed the Carbonaro. "You are about to be charged with a difficult mission. If you acquit yourself of it properly and succeed in the attempt which I will tell you of, the high *venta* will acquit you entirely upon the express condition that you renounce an acquaintance which compromises us and endangers our cause."

"What must I do?" asked the student who had made up his mind to go on to the end, even though he took other measures at a later day.

"You must go away."

"When?"

"To-night! Here are the twenty thousand francs which you wanted to borrow, and a letter which contains the instructions of the supreme *venta*. You must read it attentively, as it tells you what you have to do. After reading it you must burn it. Above all, remember that you are watched, and that the slightest weakness will cost you dear."

"I shall not falter," replied Marcas, putting the bank-notes into his pocket-book. "But can't you say some encouraging words to strengthen and enlighten me, can't you inform me of my duty? If you would tell me what it is that the high *venta* wishes me to do, I might understand its intentions much better than by reading this note."

"So be it," replied the old man after a moment's silence. "A man will leave Paris in a few days, upon a journey. The Carbonari have the greatest interest in making that journey a failure. You are intelligent, brave, and skilful. They rely upon you to interrupt the journey, and prevent its accomplishment."

"By what means?"

"Any means, provided they succeed. The letter which I have just given you, will tell you what road the traveller will follow. We cannot prevent him from starting, but we wish to prevent him from reaching his destination. The road is a long one and accidents of all kinds might happen. The money which I have given you, will enable you to prepare such accidents. Your own sagacity will effect the rest. I will add that you must act on your own responsibility. So much the worse for you if you come to grief. The brethren of the Coral Pin must not be brought into the matter. Should you betray them, they can easily reach and punish you. Start at once, and when the proper time comes the high *venta* will authorize your return."

Marcas almost choked with rage. Octavie was lost to him, for he was

forced to repair wherever the leaders of the Carbonari might have decided to send him instead of pursuing the man whom Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier had condemned to death. She was not a woman to forgive his disobedience, and even had she been likely to do so, how could he see her again when a visit to the Place Royale implied the penalty of death?

"I will moreover tell you," resumed the old conspirator, "the name of the enemy whom the high *venta* wishes you to stop on his way. It is Count René de Brouage. You start? You did not expect to hear me name a man who is the brother of the bravest and most faithful of the Carbonari? What does it matter if Fabien is of the same family? If I had a son who stood in the way of our success, I would strike him mercilessly. However I have nothing more to say to you. We shall meet when you have succeeded, or never."

Marcas rose and went off without a word. What could he say? He now knew all that he needed to know. He saw the frightful difficulties in his way, but he had also the great satisfaction of being able, by revenging himself upon a hated rival, to obey both Octavie's somewhat ambiguous orders and the very clear ones of the high *venta*. Not caring to cross the rooms, he went out by a door communicating with the boulevard and took a hackney coach to the Rue des Grès. He was anxious to read over his instructions. He did so, and found them clear and precise. They mentioned all the towns and villages through which Count René would have to pass on the road to La Rochelle, and in what way he would be obliged to travel. But nothing was said of Brouage or the treasure there. This was a secret that the high *venta* did not care to reveal to Marcas. He was free to place what obstacles he saw fit in the traveller's way, and his choice was made on this point and others. "Condemned to death by the high *venta* if I don't give up Octavie; threatened with death by Fabien de Brouage if I attack his brother," said he to himself with a bitter laugh. "Well, my mind is made up to kill that man and to see Octavie again. All the Brouages and Carbonari on the face of the earth are nothing in comparison to her. Woe be to those who stand in my way! They have condemned me, but I will be their executioner!"

Having come to this determination, Marcas wrote a letter to Mademoiselle de Saint-Hélier, which was not fated to pass through the Dark Room, and which merely contained the words:

"You said to me: 'Prove victor in the fight for Zimena's the prize.' Well, I am going to fight and I shall be the victor!"

END OF VOL. I.

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